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**Title:** Survey of employer attitudes to international students and graduates.

A report to the East Midlands Development Agency

Compiled by The University of Northampton, October 2007.

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# Survey of employer attitudes to international students and graduates

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A cooperative project conducted by  
the following universities with the  
support of the East Midlands  
Development Agency: Universities of  
Derby, De Montfort, Leicester, Lincoln,  
Loughborough, Northampton,  
Nottingham, and Nottingham Trent.

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October 2007

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Dr. Dave Burnapp:  
The University of Northampton

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## Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to all of the following: this research was made possible by funding given by the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), and the research was guided throughout by the representatives of the Careers Services of the Universities of Derby, De Montfort, Leicester, Lincoln, Loughborough, Northampton, Nottingham, and Nottingham Trent. The research was aided by collaboration from Marketing Jigsaw Limited. Most thanks are due to the 42 companies in the region who gave their time to take part in the survey, and especially to the six companies who then gave even more time to supply additional information in subsequent interviews.

## 1. Executive Summary

In 2007 a consortium of Careers Services of the universities in the East Midlands, using funding from the East Midlands Development Agency, appointed a researcher from the University of Northampton to carry out research concerning the employment of international students and graduates (i.e. those from outside the EU and the EEA) in the region.

The context of this research arose from the **'Prime Minister's Initiative Phase 2 for International Students'**, (British Council, 2006) and the DFES international strategy **'Putting the World into World-Class Education'** (DfES, 2004), which both aim to increase the numbers of international students studying in the UK as well as linking the internationalisation of UK education to the development of a strong globalised economy. In an activity prior to this research the University Careers Services in the East Midlands, in partnership with the East Midlands Development Agency, had published *'A Guide for Employers'* (November 2005) which outlined the 9 schemes available to employers for the employment of international students/Graduates. Employability skills are integral to definitions of university level education, and a range of schemes have emerged to enable international students/graduates to participate in employment in the UK. The University Careers Services suspect that the complexity of this area of employment could result in confusion amongst potential employers, possibly leading to reluctance to employ international students.

The aims of this research were therefore:

- to identify the degree of awareness of employers concerning these schemes;
- to discover what employers believe to be the actual or potential benefits and barriers of employing these students;
- to collect relevant experiences of the employers;
- to gather employers' expectations of such employment in future;

- to elicit employers' recommendations concerning future activities which the careers services of the universities could carry out.

The researchers collected information relating to nine employment schemes open to international students and graduates using a detailed online survey (using both quantitative and qualitative responses) from 42 companies in the region, and six follow-up telephone interviews.

The findings summarised below relate to a wide range of employers (by size and area of activity).

- These employers use a variety of recruitment procedures and channels, and each method used presents certain challenges (including understanding of specific Human Resource Management practices and related language skills) which may be beyond the experience and expectations of international students.
- Awareness amongst employers of the schemes varied: typically between a quarter and a third of employers claimed to have an understanding of them, but for some specific schemes awareness was as little as 10%. The telephone interviews revealed that there is confusion concerning a distinction between international and EU students.
- Concerning the schemes available to students before they graduate, there is a lack of awareness of the schemes rather than to any resistance to them. Over 60% answered that either they would, or did not know whether they would, employ students under these schemes in the future.
- The schemes for new graduates form the area where there have been many changes recently. Awareness is hence low, but there seems to be little resistance to the possibility to employing international graduates, as 62% indicated that either they would, or did not know whether they would, employ such graduates in the future.

- The employers' responses concerning more specialist schemes (involving work permits) elicited some critical incidents which might serve to delimit the areas of responsibility of university careers services, as they must consider whether they would have the resources to become involved with such specific cases.
- The most highly valued possible benefits identified in the survey concern '*over here*' attributes: such as having needed technical skills and diversifying the workforce, rather than '*over there*' attributes (knowledge of overseas practices, contacts and languages) which are rated less highly. In the interviews, however, some '*over there*' benefits were identified.
- Concerning potential barriers, the overall perceived anxiety amongst those who have not employed these students is greater than the actual difficulties found amongst those employers who have employed them. This provides an agenda for activities to be undertaken by universities with employers to close this perception gap.
- The actual barriers reported suggest the need to take longitudinal activities with international students, beginning at their induction to their university courses and continuing throughout their studies, which should aim to enhance their cross-cultural employment skills, both linguistically and related to the culture of work.
- There is a demand for support for employers from the University Careers Guidance services for (in order of preference): information and guidance concerning the various schemes; creating a single point of contact in the region concerning the employment of international students/graduates; opportunities to meet international students; and organising seminars. In the interviews employers suggested that such support could include web-based or emailed newsletters.
- Concerning preparation of students, again there is a clear demand for action: improving transferable skills (CVs and interview preparation);

clarifying potential roles; and improving the students' knowledge of UK/EU business environment. The write-in comments again stress the importance of information and the need for English skills to be appropriate.

*Recommendations concerning further research.*

Two further research projects are prompted by the findings of this report and which will enable the activities recommended below:

- Further research should be undertaken to gather students' perspectives of their experiences on the various schemes; this would enable the preparation of case studies to form part of future awareness-raising activities.
- Further research should be undertaken to explore more deeply the types of language weakness that is reported to be the major deterrent to employment of international students and graduates; this would enable better preparation of international students and graduates for such employment.

*Recommendations concerning careers services activities directed at students*

The difficulties reported could be described as resulting from cultural difference as much as knowledge/skills gaps, and so go beyond the needs for training on CV writing and interview skills . Hence:

- Activities with students should be longitudinal, beginning at their induction to their university courses and continuing throughout their studies.
- Training should be targeted to enhance students' cross-cultural employment skills, both linguistically and related to the culture of work.
- Careers services need to prepare international students for the diversity of information channels used in recruitment, the corresponding language demands associated with them, and also the underlying HR practices which justify them.
- The careers services would need to work closely with other parts of their institutions.

*Recommendations concerning careers services activities directed at employers*

There is a need for awareness-raising activities in general, as obstacles are more due to a lack of awareness of the schemes rather than to any resistance to them.

- The careers services need to define the amount, and the limits, of support that they will be able to offer to employers.
- The careers services should explore the possibility of a single, regional point of contact, to be a source of dissemination of information, provision of seminars and workshops, and organising events where employers can meet students.
- The careers services should explore the possibility of using web-based information channels.
- The particular needs of small and medium size enterprises are likely to be the main focus of these dissemination activities, as such SMEs are unlikely to have in-house expertise.
- The careers services should negotiate with NI offices to find a solution to the vicious circle related to issuing NI numbers, and hence clarify the work entitlement status of students.
- The IGS scheme, (which is open generally for all students regardless of level and subject speciality, and which replaces two more complex schemes) should be publicised to clarify the work entitlement status of graduates.
- The careers services should prepare case studies based on the experiences and lessons learnt from previous such employment in order to close the gap between perceived difficulties and reported benefits.
- These case studies should identify the possible benefits of these schemes for *outward* involvement in globalisation as well as domestic benefits.



## 2. Introduction

Early in 2007 a consortium of Careers Services of the universities in the East Midlands received funding from the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) to carry out research concerning the employment of international students and graduates in the region. An international student, for the purpose of this research, refers to a student from outside the EU and the EEA. In February 2007 the consortium appointed a researcher from the University of Northampton to design and carry out the research, which was to consist of an online survey supported by follow-up telephone interviews.

The context of this research arose from the **'Prime Minister's Initiative Phase 2 for International Students'** (British Council, 2006), which has set high and rising targets for the enrolment of international students in colleges and universities in the UK, and also from the international strategy paper of the Department for Education and Skills **'Putting the World into World-Class Education'** (DfES, 2004), which has identified a series of goals for the internationalisation of UK education linked to the development of a strong globalised economy. Participation of international students and graduates within the UK economy is seen to contribute to these goals. In addition international education is itself an increasingly valuable activity and is becoming a highly competitive field, as many other countries seek to increase their recruitment of international students. The provision of employment opportunities, and the ability to offer the possibility of gaining work placement experience (during and after their studies), are seen to be essential to enable UK universities to compete internationally with other suppliers of Higher or Tertiary Education. According to Universities UK (2007), using statistics derived from the Higher Education statistics Agency (HESA), in 2003/04 there were approximately 211,000 students at UK universities who were from non-EU countries, and in 2005/06 there were a total of 330,080 non-UK students, of whom 33% were from EU countries and 1% from the EEA.

There are hence multiple potential beneficiaries of the employment schemes for international students and graduates; however the development of these

opportunities has added extra responsibilities and may demand new areas of activity for university careers services. A report '**Broadening our horizons**' resulting from a survey conducted in 2004 by UKCOSA (The Council for International Education) into all aspects of the experience of international students in UK universities and colleges, stated that international students *'provide a pool of highly skilled labour on which both universities and UK businesses call to make up for skills shortages in the domestic market'* (UKCOSA 2004, p6). One section of that report examines employment issues, yet it differs in scope from this research in three ways: it examines employment from the perspective of students rather than from the perspective of employers; it covers EU students as well as non-EU students; its focus is on work before graduation only, whilst this report looks also at schemes available after graduation. The UKCOSA survey found that 53% of students from non-EU countries had worked during their studies, however for these students it had been more difficult to find work than was the case for EU students, and amongst the difficulties cited were employers' uncertainties about the legality of their working, confusion concerning obtaining NI numbers, and students' weakness in English.

Employability is integral to the understanding of what constitutes learning at university level in the UK. '**The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - January 2001**' produced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2001) gives the following description of Honours level courses:

An Honours graduate will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the graduate will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The graduate will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

An Honours graduate should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

(QAA 2001)

It describes Masters level courses thus:

Much of the study undertaken at Masters level will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems.

They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

(QAA 2001)

A number of different employment opportunities for international students and/or graduates have emerged, whilst the definition of 'international' students has changed as, for example, the widening of the European Union means that entrants from countries like Poland and Lithuania are no longer considered to be 'international'. The flux in regulations concerning this area of employment became apparent to the researchers when, during preparation of the research survey instrument, the regulations were changed once again to enable all international graduates, regardless of subject or level of degree, to work in the UK for one year after graduation.

The University Careers Services suspect that the complexity of this area of employment could result in confusion amongst potential employers, possibly leading to reluctance to employ international students and/or graduates, so frustrating the ambitions of the students themselves, the internationalisation strategies of the universities, and the intentions of the government strategy outlined above. The University Careers Services in the region are eager to take action, by working both with employers and students to remedy any difficulties, hence creating the need for this exploratory research project to

identify what is the current situation within the East Midlands, in order to plan suitable responses to the needs which emerge.

The aims of the research were therefore:

- to identify the degree of awareness of employers in the region concerning the various schemes which currently exist to enable international students to carry out work either during their studies or upon graduation;
- to discover what employers believe to be the actual or potential benefits and the actual or perceived barriers of employing these students;
- to collect experiences of the employers in the region resulting from employing international students and/or graduates under these schemes;
- to gather employers' expectations of future employment of international students and/or graduates;
- to elicit employers' recommendations concerning future activities which the careers services of the universities involved could carry out to increase regional participation and take-up of these schemes.

It is envisaged that the findings of this research will inform future developments in the East Midlands related to the employment of international students and graduates.

### 3. Research Method

An initial draft survey was compiled by the researchers as a result of meeting with the representatives of the careers services of the East Midlands Universities to clarify their requirements. To achieve the aims described above the survey needed:

- to describe the various employment schemes relevant to international students;
- to discover the degree of awareness of these schemes amongst employers;
- to discover the actual or potential benefits and the actual or perceived barriers of employing these students;
- to discover the experience any employers already have of these schemes;
- to discover their expectations of future take-up of these schemes;
- to ask for their recommendations for possible support from university careers services.

Because of the number of relevant schemes (nine in total), and the need to describe each one individually and to gather employers' responses for each scheme separately, the survey was necessarily quite long and complex.

The draft survey was amended by the careers services representatives in a follow-up meeting, and then a pilot version was trialled with four employers in the region. Using feedback obtained from telephone interviews with those four employers, modifications were made to permit easier and faster navigation in order to skip sections not relevant to any individual employer. The final version of the survey was agreed (see Appendix A), consisting of 87 questions in six sections:

*Section A:* Company information, relating to contact information, number of employees, methods of recruitment, and areas of activity.

*Section B:* Awareness of the nine schemes identified (*elaborated on below*), any experience they have of using such schemes, and future intentions.

*Section C:* Benefits and Skills which have been identified as potentially accruing to employers, including elements such as gaining knowledge of target areas, language skills, and contacts (*elaborated on below*).

*Section D:* Barriers and Difficulties, both actual difficulties employers have found and perceived future difficulties, such as lack of knowledge of UK/EU conditions and communication difficulties (*elaborated on below*).

*Section E:* Take-up and roles, relating to the recruitment process and types of employment offered.

*Section F:* Role of and assistance from university careers services, both concerning communication with employers and preparation of candidates.

The survey was placed online, linked from an emailed introductory letter which described the research aims and objectives and requested participation. The majority of the questions were tick boxes, with the possibility of write-in responses to 13 questions which asked if respondents had any further thoughts to add. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they were willing to be telephoned to give more detailed responses. Subsequently six of these telephone interviews were carried out.

## 4. Survey design

### 4.1. *Schemes*

The nine schemes covered in part B of the survey are summarised below:

*Part-time work:* International students with a valid student visa are usually entitled to work part-time up to 20 hours per week.

*Vacation work:* International students with a valid student visa are usually entitled to work full-time during vacations.

*Work Placements:* International students may undertake a structured period of work experience integral to their course for up to 12 months.

*Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme (SEGS):* graduates of science, mathematics and technology were usually able to work for one year after graduating.

*Master's Graduates:* Graduates of any Masters programmes who started their courses after May 2006 are usually able to work for one year after they graduate.

*International Graduate Scheme (IGS):* as of May 2007 this replaced SEGS to allow all international graduates to work for one year after graduating.

*Shortage Occupation List scheme:* Employers can recruit people who possess skills which are on the Work Permits (UK) Shortage Occupation List.

*Non Shortage Occupations (Commercial & Business Work permits):* in some circumstances employers can recruit beyond the EEA for vacancies not on the Shortage Occupation List but for which they have been unable to find suitable candidates.

*Training and Work Experience Scheme:* Employers can apply for TWES permit in order to give training or work experience to someone who would otherwise not be allowed to work in the UK.

For each of these schemes the employers were asked to respond whether they had an understanding of the scheme in detail, a general understanding of them, or little or no understanding. They were also asked if they had ever employed anyone under any of those schemes, and if they envisaged employing anyone under them within the next three years.

#### **4.2.      *Perceived Benefits and Skills***

The employers were asked in part C of the survey to identify the benefits and skills which they would expect to gain by employing international students and/or graduates. The suggested benefits included the following, and respondents were asked to identify as many as they liked:

*Language skills*

*Cultural awareness*

*Knowledge of overseas business practice*

*Overseas contacts and networks*

*Business awareness and technical skills*

*Creating a diverse workforce*

*Any additional benefits (write in)*

#### **4.3.      *Barriers and difficulties***

The employers were asked in part D of the survey to identify the barriers and difficulties (either *actual* if they have experience of employing international students, or *potential* if they do not have this experience). The suggested difficulties included the following, and respondents were asked to identify as many as they liked:

*Lack of commercial awareness*

*Lack of knowledge*

*Lack of skills*

*Weakness in English language*

*Lack of knowledge of UK/EU market conditions*

*Lack of experience*



*Difficulty in adapting to company requirements*

*Company's uncertainty of legal position*

*Any additional difficulties (write in)*

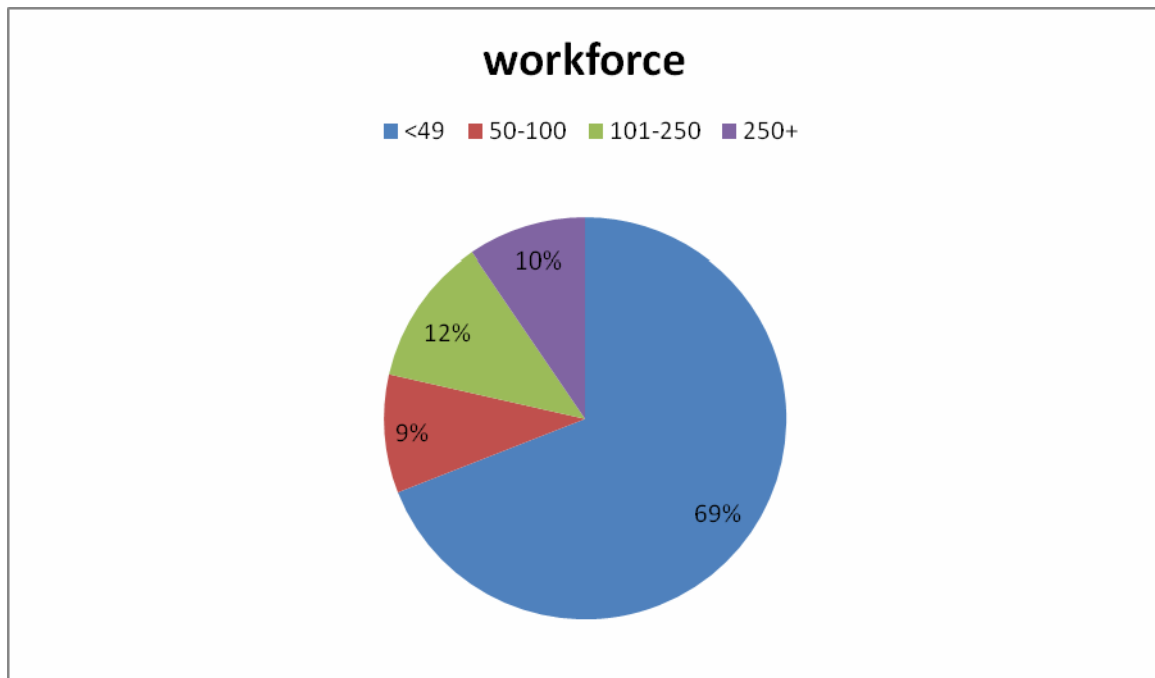
## **5. Responses**

Several of the participating universities supplied data bases of contacts, and in addition two data bases were purchased specifically for this research. As all of the databases listed employers in the same region (the East Midlands consisting of: Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, and Nottinghamshire) there will have been some duplication of contacts in these data bases. In addition the method of delivery – using email – resulted in a large number of ‘undeliverables’ which did not reach their targets, hence it is not possible to give a statistical response rate.

The number of survey responses (42) was lower than anticipated, but the depth of information from what is a very detailed survey, and the range of the responding companies (using the categories of numbers of employees, areas of activity, and experiences of this type of employment) supported by the six more in-depth follow-up telephone interviews, is adequate for exploratory research of this nature, and is sufficient to supply the intended outcomes of the research in terms of making recommendations for future university careers services activities.

### **5.1.        *Section A: Company information***

***Q7: number of employees*** (n=42)



**Q 8, 9, 10: methods of recruitment**

The vast majority, 38 out of the 42 companies, recruit staff directly within the East Midlands, with 16 companies recruiting nationally (therefore many recruiting both locally and nationally). The write-in clarification of this aspect revealed the following range of recruitment methods:

- *Advertising in trade and local papers.*
- *Recruitment consultants are generally used but also web-sites such as totaljobs and Monster with CV screening.*
- *Advertising / word of mouth/ recruitment agencies.*
- *Variety of recruitment methods used, word of mouth, specialist insurance recruitment agencies, advertising in local press.*
- *Advertising mainly in the regional press and on the internet inviting CVs & expressions of interest, once in these are then screened in-house and suitable candidates are then invited for interview and scored in accordance with our employment law advisers.*
- *We have PhD level geologists working for us. Recruitment is therefore specialised. We recruit via universities, our own and specialist websites/publications. We review all applications ourselves, i.e. no agency involvement. Recruitment for non-geological staff is generally done via our own website, and local media. Again all applications are screened internally.*

- *Agencies.*
- *Automated pre-screening at application stage followed by a further screen by the line manager, then interview.*
- *We use both direct and agency recruitment processes.*
- *We are a social enterprise cooperative company limited by guarantee and currently do not have any employees as such. People work for us in a freelance basis.*
- *We recruit officer level and above staff nationally, advertising in the Guardian and recruit assistant officer level and below through local advertising and mailing lists.*
- *Central recruitment in East Midlands looking after all of our UK sites, all work on the recruitment is done at this office.*
- *Mixture of both Agency and local advertising depending upon position being recruited for.*
- *Use "hot prospects" when funded by EMDA and have used Chamber of Commerce careers service at reduced prices. Otherwise have recruited direct.*
- *Graduate recruitment is on-line.*
- *Local newspaper is always the first point of recruitment.*
- *We often use agencies but sometimes advertise.*
- *Agency / procurement services.*
- *Job application – telephone interview – final interview and role-play with directors.*
- *On occasions we use recruitment agencies, but we advertise in professional magazines and the internet as well. If we're looking to recruit graduates we advertise on university web sites.*
- *Word of mouth or national newspaper advert – Daily Telegraph.*

### **Q11: Areas of activity**

The survey revealed a wide diversity of areas of activity amongst these companies:

*Creative (3)*  
*Financial & management consultancy (3)*  
*Education (2)*  
*Service sector (2)*  
*Engineering (3)*

*Property & Construction*  
*Legal Services*  
*Manufacturing and processing (7)*  
*Administration (8)*  
*Marketing*  
*Travel & tourism*  
*Software Engineering*  
*Architecture & Architectural services (2)*  
*Auctions*  
*Geological Consultancy*  
*Printing*  
*Utilities*  
*Business support*  
*Translation*  
*Waste managements and recycling*  
*Retailing*  
*Training*

#### *5.1.1. Summary of Section A*

It is noticeable that the described recruitment procedures are very varied, and that employers rely on a variety of information channels to attract applicants. It is possible that some international students may not be familiar with all of the information channels mentioned:

*Press:* trade and specialist press, as well as local, regional, and national papers (often depending on level).

*Recruitment Agencies:* including specialist recruitment agencies (e.g. in insurance), recruitment consultants & procurement services, "hot prospects", and Chamber of Commerce careers service.

*Online:* online recruitment sites, companies' own websites, university websites, and specialist (professional) websites.

*Networks:* implied by 'word-of-mouth' and 'mailing lists'.

Similarly each such channel will make specific communicative demands associated with culturally-specific Human Resource Management practices (most clearly implied with the mention of 'role-plays'). Some of these communicative demands are spoken, some written, with more subtle differences such as the distinction between face-to-face and telephone

interviews, which again may be more complex than the students expect. Each of these also requires recognition of the rules of some specific language game, for example: how much self-disclosure is expected in an interview; how detailed should an application form answer be; how ambitious is it suitable to appear?

The specific language formats mentioned include:

*CVs*

*Expressions of interest*

*Applications*

*Face-to-face interviews*

*Telephone interviews*

*Role-plays*

In addition the mentions of 'screening' and 'automated pre-screening' may imply some form of psychometric testing, involving on-line form-filling where subtle linguistic distinctions (such as answers asking respondents to choose between 'often' and 'usually') can acquire quantitative/categorical significance.

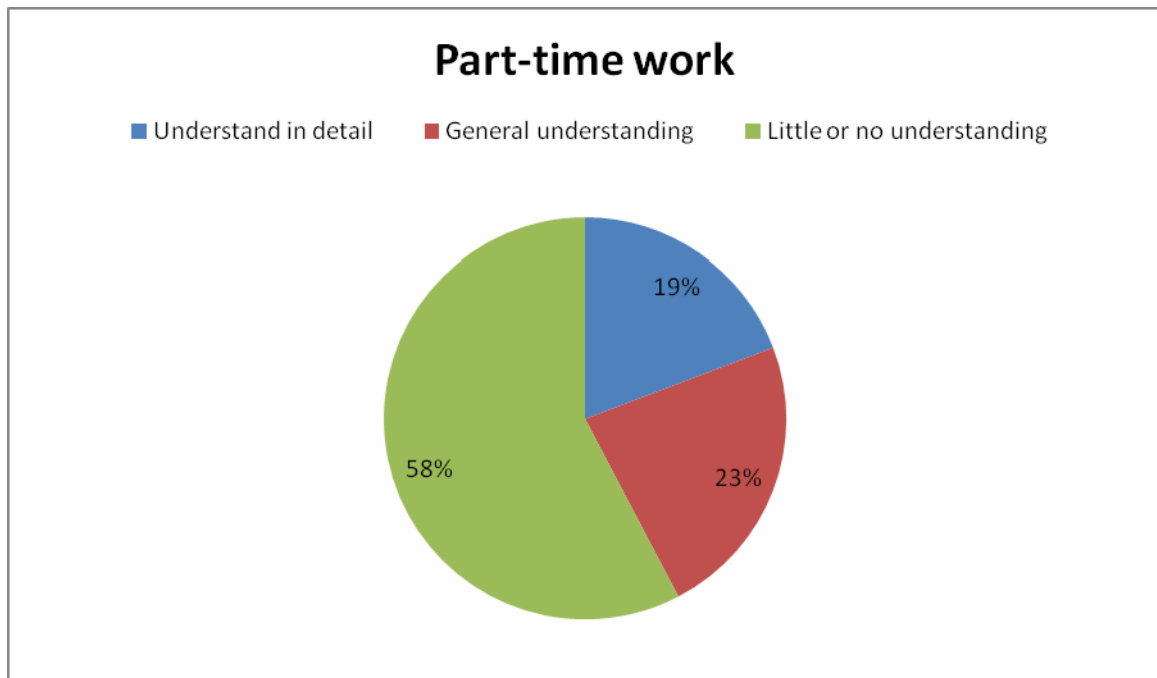
It would seem, therefore that any activities provided by universities for international students should acknowledge and illuminate this diversity of information channels used in recruitment, the corresponding language demands associated with them, and also the underlying HR practices which justify them.

## **5.2. Section B: Awareness of the nine schemes identified**

(Those employers who were not aware of any of these schemes could navigate directly to section C and not complete section B).

*Part-time work scheme*

***Q12: Understanding of part-time work scheme (n=26)***



Fewer than half of the companies who completed this section, and fewer than a quarter in total of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows international students to work part time whilst studying for their degrees. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, utilities, supermarket retailing, a chamber of commerce, administration, manufacturing & processing, car-rental, engineering, finance & management consultancy, and education.

#### ***Q13: Employment under part-time work scheme***

Just four of the 27 companies who answered this question had actually employed international students on this basis.

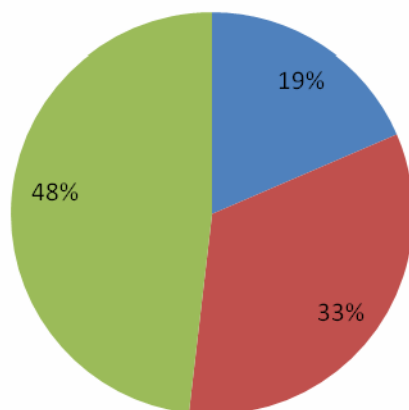
#### ***Q14: Thoughts concerning part-time work scheme***

- *Useful, but only for part times roles, which for us are few and far between. (Utilities company)*
- *We employ part-time students in our stores but am unable to comment as I do not work in store. (Supermarket)*

#### ***Q15: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 27)***

## Employ part-timers in future

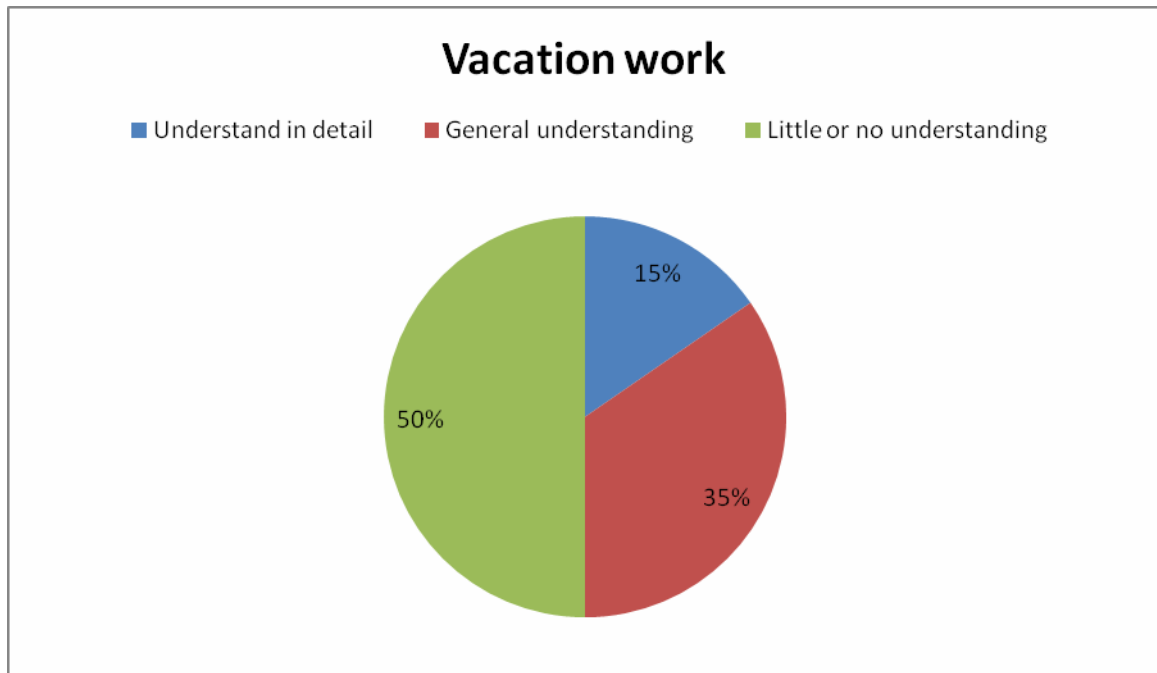
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know





### *Vacation work scheme*

#### **Q16: Understanding of vacation work scheme (n=26)**



Exactly half of the companies who completed this section, over a third of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows international students to work full time during their vacations. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: auctions, utilities, engineering, administration, manufacturing & processing, finance & management consultancy, chamber of commerce, education, service sector. The graduate recruitment manager of a leading supermarket retailer was not aware of this scheme.

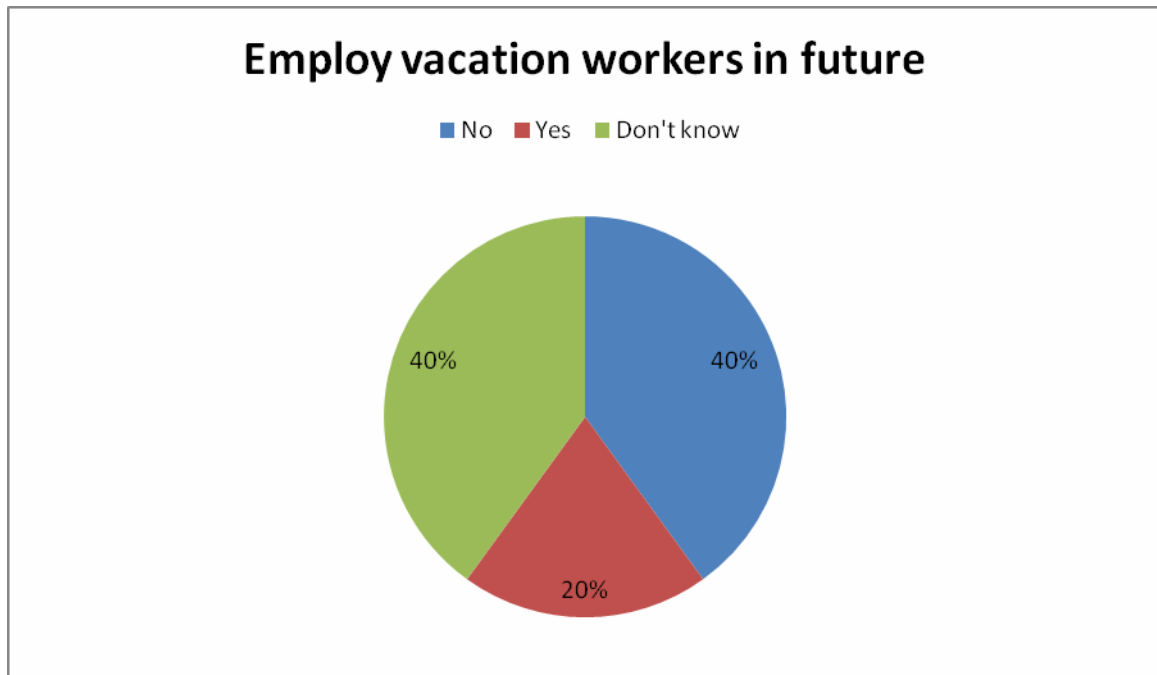
#### **Q17: Employment under vacation work scheme**

Just four of the 27 companies who answered this question had actually employed international students on this basis.

#### **Q18: Thoughts concerning vacation work scheme**

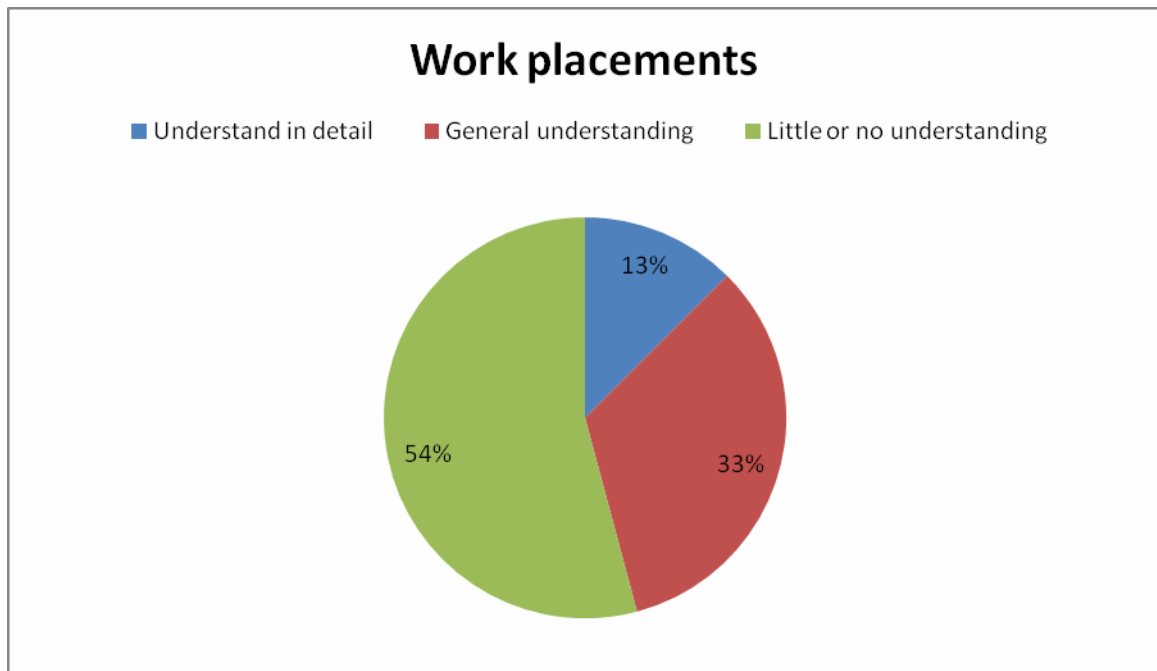
- *A placement is currently in process. (Auctions)*
- *Good scheme. (Manufacturing & Processing)*
- *Excellent, it gives them knowledge of working in an office environment whilst developing their international language skills. (Chamber of Commerce).*

**Q19: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 25)**



*Work placements scheme*

**Q20: Understanding of work placements scheme (n=24)**



Fewer than half of the companies who completed this section, around a quarter of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of

the scheme which allows international students to undertake a structured period of work experience integral to their studies for up to 12 months. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: Travel & tourism, engineering, auctions, utilities, administration, manufacturing & processing, finance & management consultancy, and service sector.

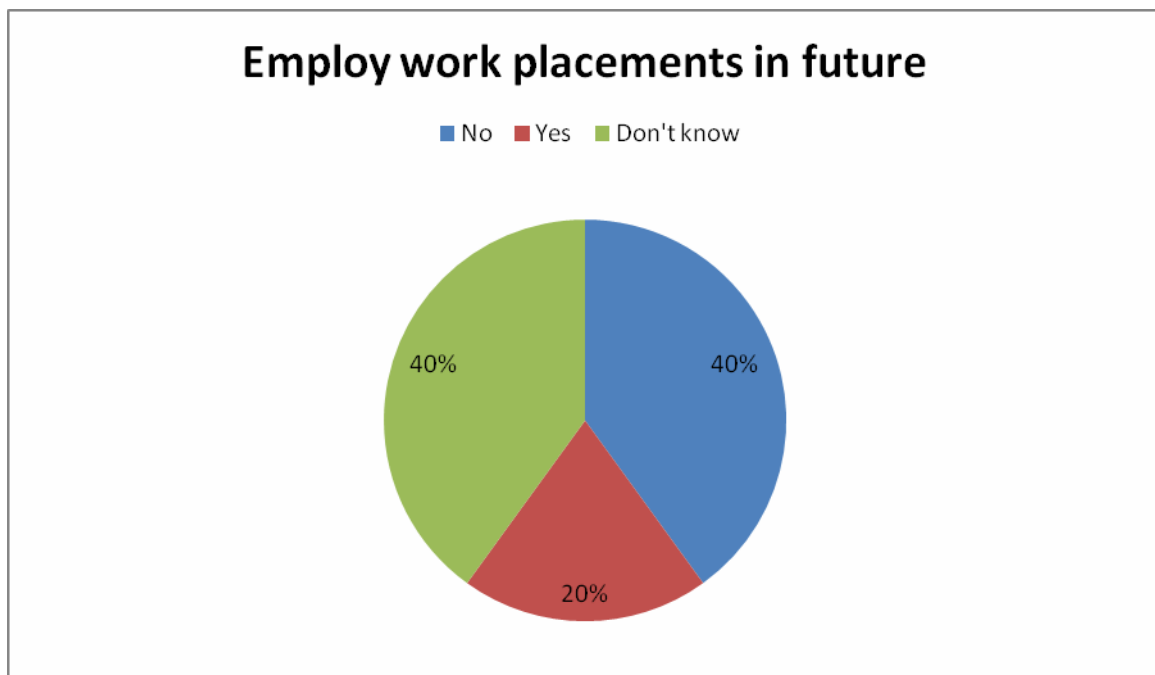
***Q21: Employment under work placements scheme***

Just three of the 26 companies who answered this question had actually employed international students on this basis.

***Q22: Thoughts concerning work placements scheme***

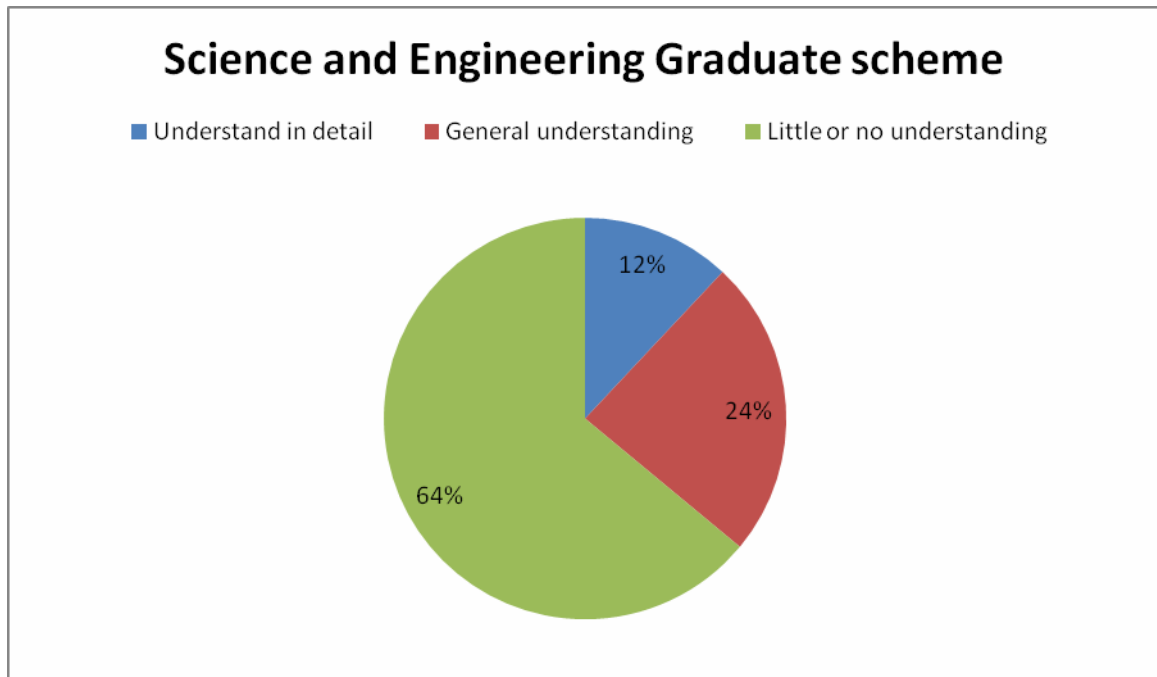
- *Good. (Engineering)*
- *Good idea. (Manufacturing & Processing)*

***Q23: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 25)***



*Science and Engineering Graduate scheme (SEGS)*

**Q24: Understanding of Science and Engineering Graduate scheme (SEGS) (n=25)**



Just over a third of the companies who completed this section, fewer than a quarter of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows graduates of science, mathematics, and technology to work for one year after graduating. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, administration, engineering, manufacturing & processing, and finance & management consultancy.

**Q25: Employment under Science and Engineering Graduate scheme**

Just three of the 25 companies who answered this question had actually employed international graduates on this basis.

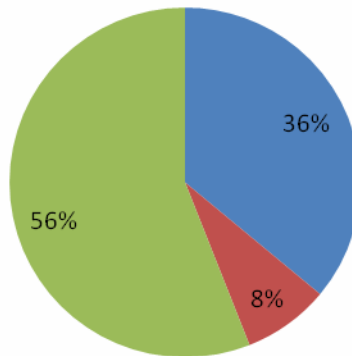
**Q26: Thoughts concerning Science and Engineering Graduate scheme**

- *Ok for other people, not relevant for our type of business. (Training)*
- *Very good idea for both parties. (Manufacturing & Processing)*

**Q27: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 25)**

## Employ Science and Engineering Graduate scheme in future

■ No ■ Yes ■ Don't know

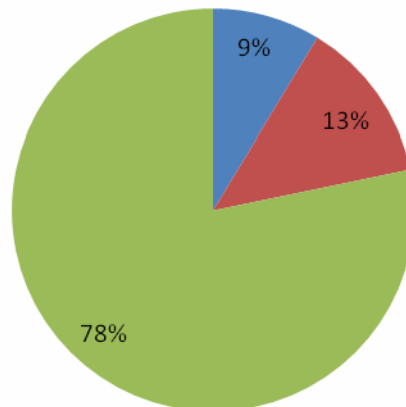


### *International Graduates Scheme*

#### **Q28: Understanding of International Graduates Scheme (n=23)**

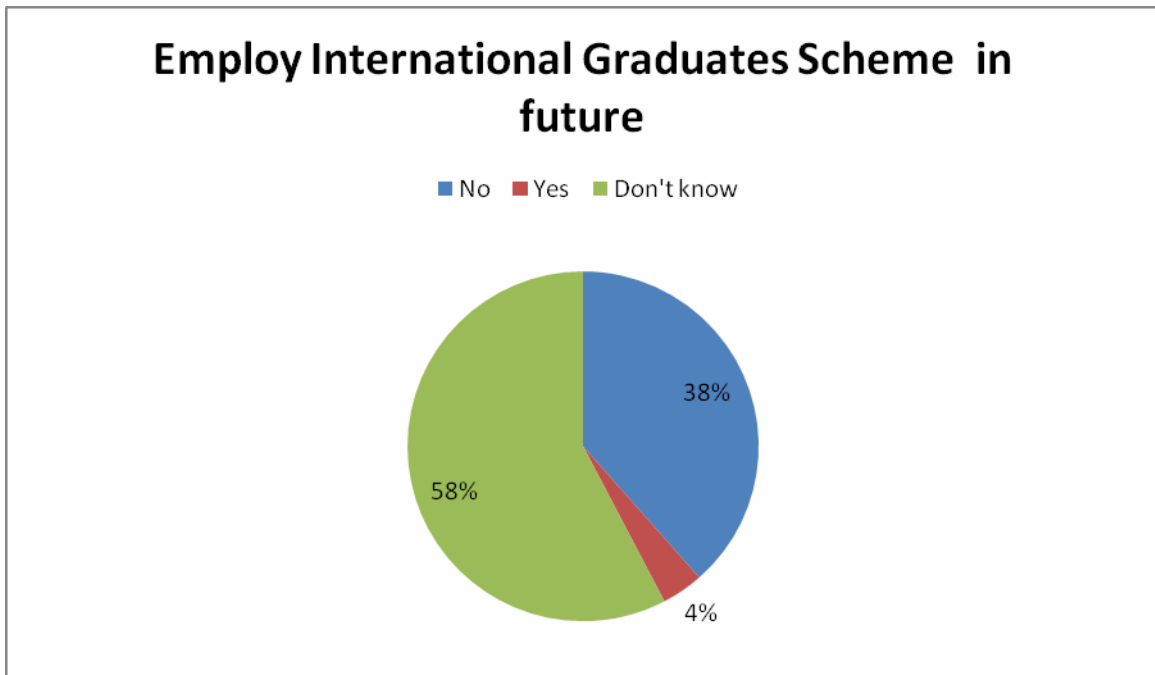
## International Graduates Scheme

■ Understand in detail ■ General understanding ■ Little or no understanding



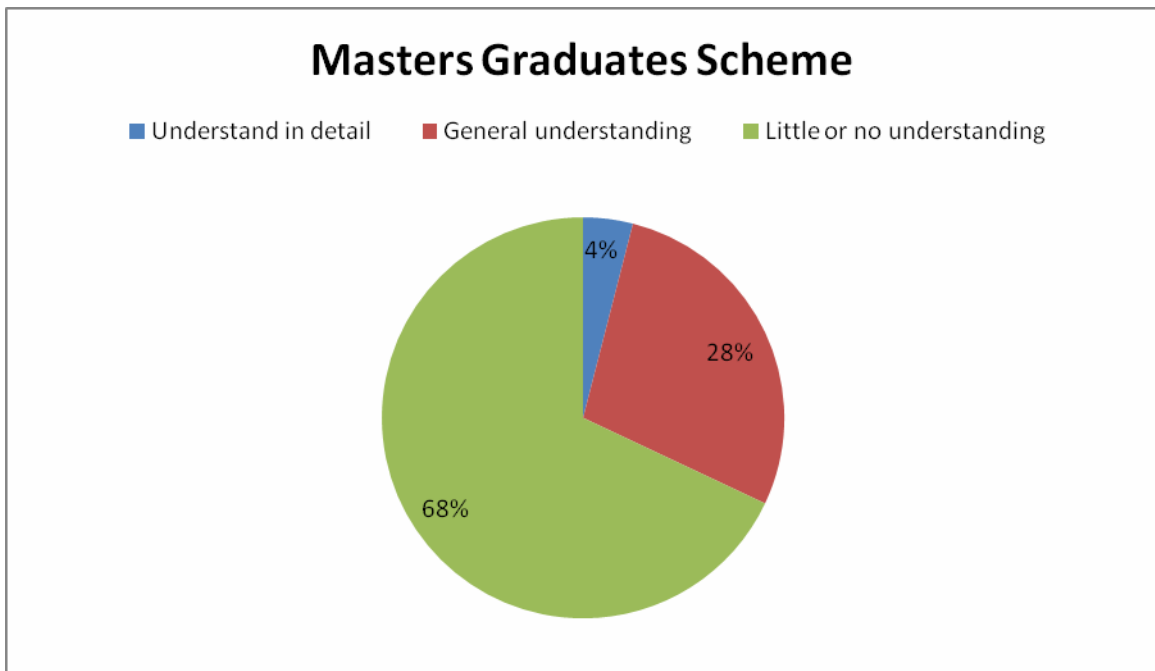
Just over one in five of the companies who completed this section, just over ten percent of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which from May 2007 allows graduates of any subject to work for one year after graduating. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, finance & management consultancy, chamber of commerce, and engineering.

**Q29: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 26)**



*Masters Graduates Scheme*

**Q30: Understanding of Masters Graduates Scheme (n=25)**



Almost a third of the companies who completed this section, a fifth of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which from May 2006 allowed graduates of Master's programmes to work for

one year after graduating. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, utilities, finance & management consultancy, chamber of commerce, education, and engineering.

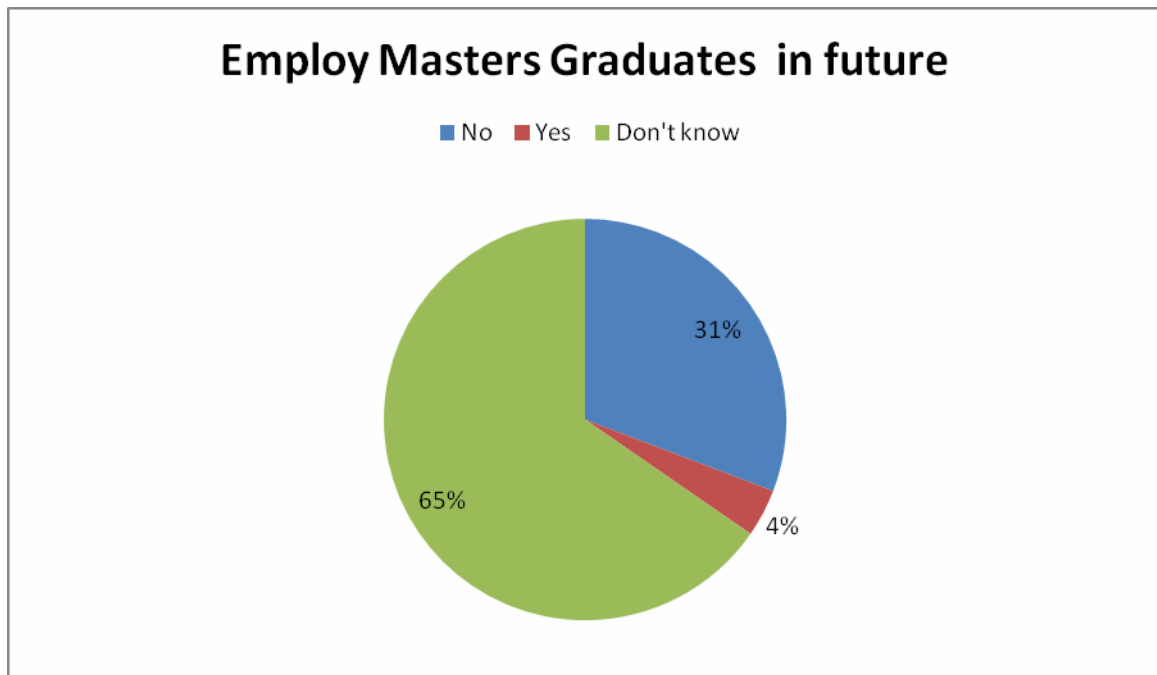
***Q31: Employment under Masters Graduates Scheme***

Just one of the 25 companies who answered this question had actually employed an international graduate on this basis.

***Q32: Thoughts concerning Masters Graduates Scheme***

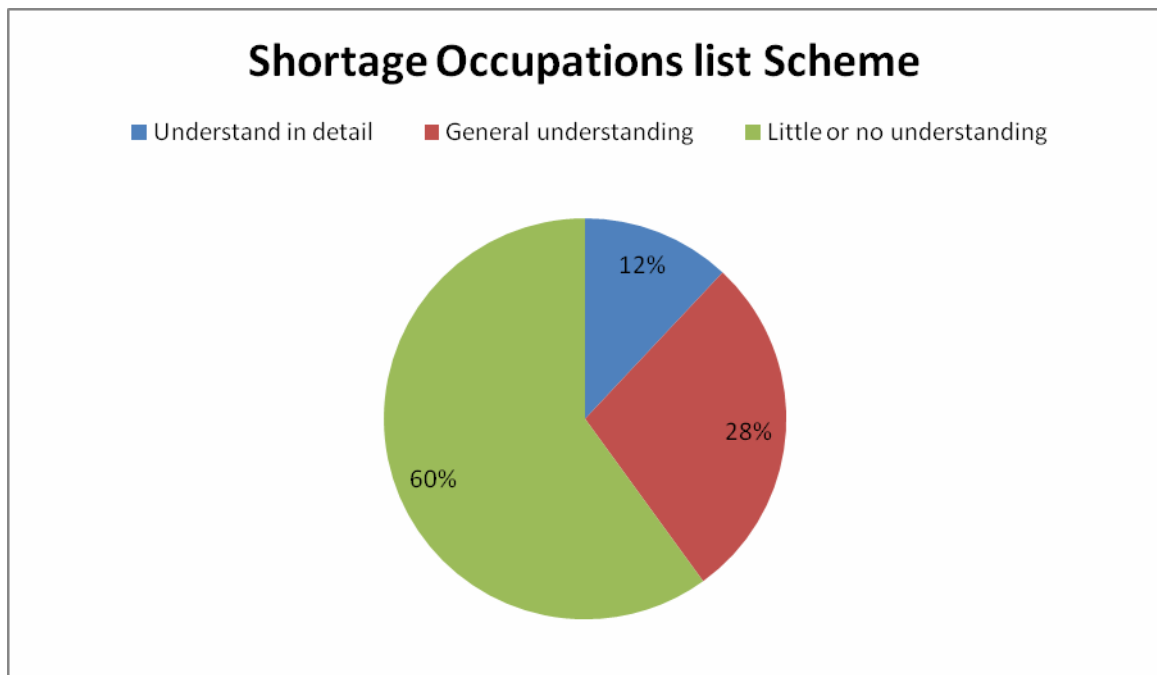
None

***Q33: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 26)***



### *Shortage Occupations list Scheme*

#### **Q34: Understanding of Shortage Occupations list Scheme (n=25)**



Forty percent of the companies who completed this section, around a quarter of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows employers to recruit people who possess skills which are on the Work Permits (UK) Shortage Occupation list. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, geological consultancy, utilities, finance & management consultancy, manufacturing & processing, chamber of commerce, and engineering.

#### **Q35: Employment under Shortage Occupations list Scheme**

Four of the 26 companies who answered this question had actually employed international graduates on this basis.

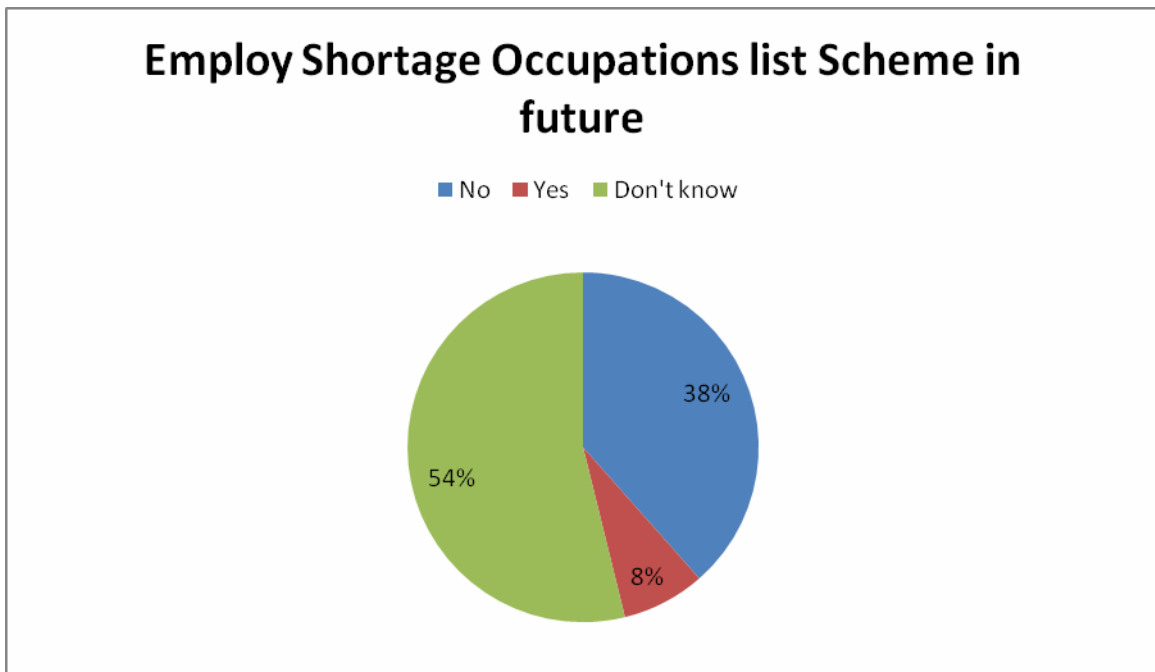
#### **Q36: Thoughts concerning Shortage Occupations list Scheme**

- *It allowed us to gain the employee we sought quickly. The work permit has been gained with minimum delay. (Geological consultancy)*
- *Feel that the skills shortage occupation list does not include all skills shortage occupations and is therefore useless to our company. (Administration)*



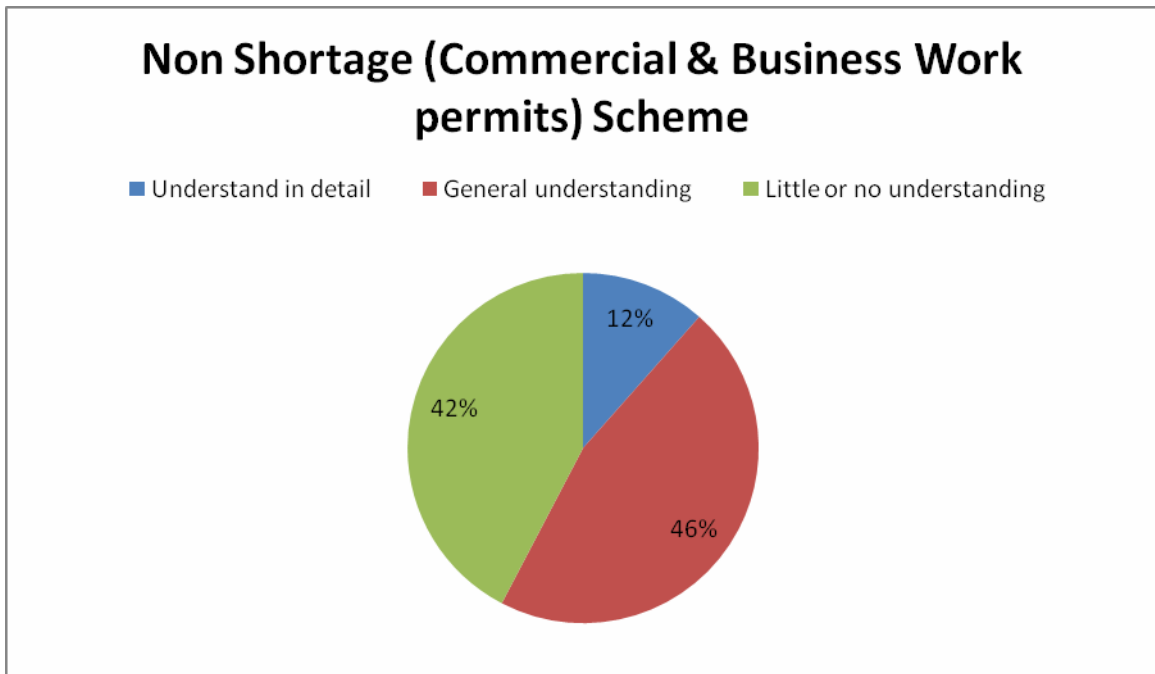
- *The scheme is a nightmare. We employed an experienced engineer with a degree in engineering from Albania who has worked in the EU (Italy) and had been there for some 6 years. The first application was refused and we had to appeal to get it through. The scheme rules were ignored by work permits. While I think this scheme is essential to getting quality people to work in the UK its administration is difficult. We also need the employee to visit European cities regularly and we can only get 6 monthly visas to Europe (Schengen). (Manufacturing & Processing)*

**Q37: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 26)**



*Non Shortage (Commercial & Business Work permits) Scheme*

***Q38: Understanding of Non Shortage (Commercial & Business Work permits) Scheme (n=26)***



Well over half of the companies who completed this section, over a third of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows employers to recruit people for vacancies not on the Work Permits (UK) Shortage Occupation list but for which they have been unable to find suitable candidates. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, administration, service sector, finance & management consultancy, and engineering.

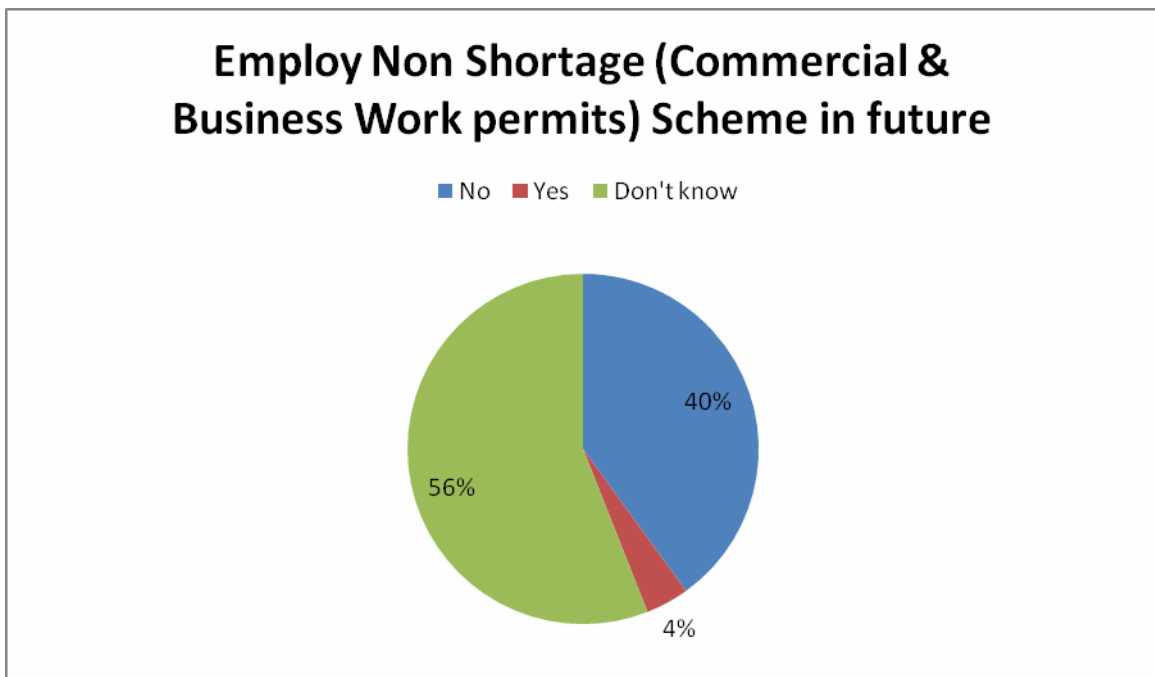
***Q39: Employment under Non Shortage (Commercial & Business Work permits) Scheme***

Two of the 26 companies who answered this question had actually employed international graduates on this basis.

***Q40: Thoughts concerning Non Shortage (Commercial & Business Work permits) Scheme***

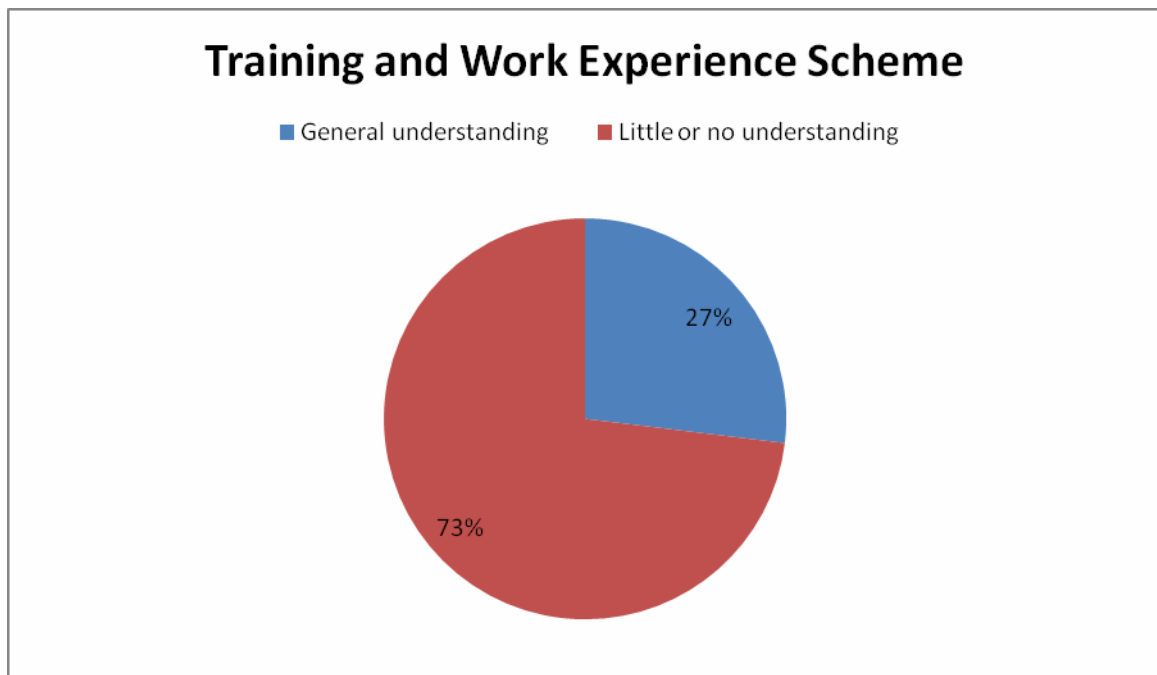
- *We tried several times to employ someone under this scheme but the application was rejected three times. The Home Office (Works Permits UK) felt that the salary was not suitable for the job which was ridiculous as many resident graduates were working in the same position on that same salary within our company. Also we had to advertise the position nationally before we could give the job to an international graduate. As a small local company this was not at all practical and was a barrier to employing the most suitable candidate for the job.*
- *Not a chance!*

**Q41: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 25)**



### *Training and Work Experience Scheme*

#### ***Q42: Understanding of Training and Work Experience Scheme (n=26)***



Only seven of the companies who completed this section, one sixth of those who responded to this survey, claimed any understanding of the scheme which allows employers to apply for work permits so they can give training or work experience to international staff. Those who had some understanding included the areas of: travel & tourism, administration, chamber of commerce, manufacturing & processing, service sector, and finance & management consultancy.

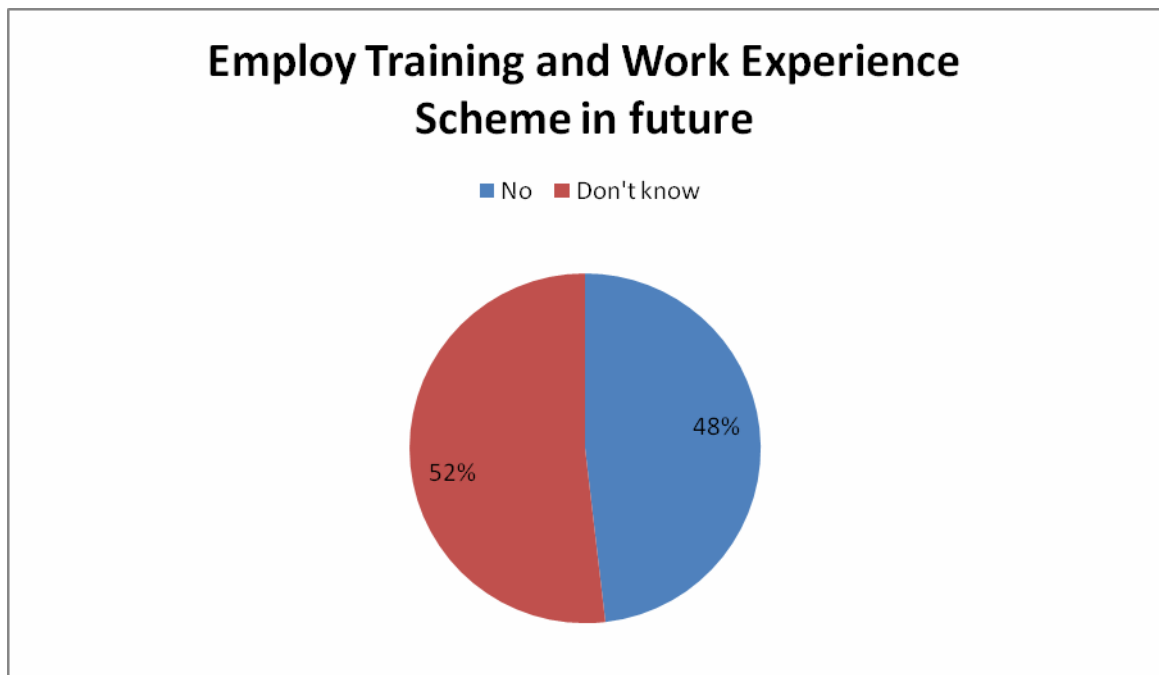
#### ***Q43: Employment under Training and Work Experience Scheme***

Only one of the 26 companies who answered this question had actually employed people on this basis.

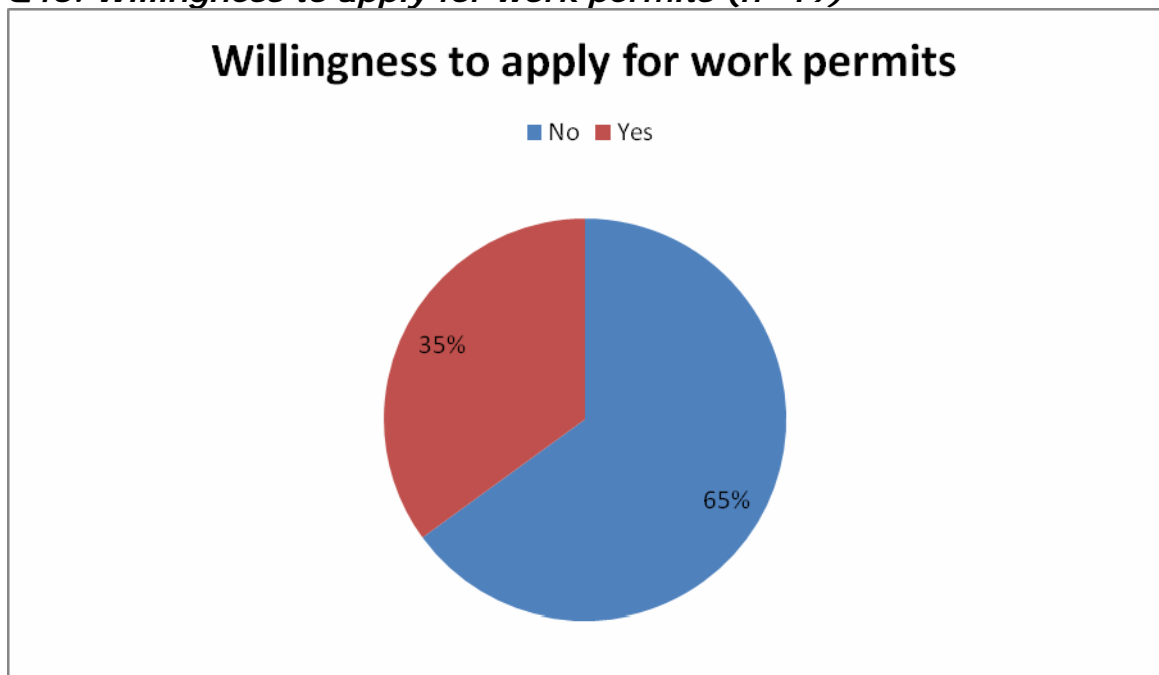
#### ***Q44: Thoughts concerning Training and Work Experience Scheme***

- *OK idea*

***Q45: Envisage employing people under this scheme in next three years (n = 26)***



***Q46: Willingness to apply for work permits (n= 19)***



#### ***5.2.1. Summary of Section B***

Only 27 of the 42 companies had any knowledge of the schemes collectively, i.e. know that there are schemes which are related to the employment of international students and graduates. There seems also to be confusion about

who are international students and graduates, as in the follow-up interviews it became clear that several employers were in fact reporting on employment of EU nationals: it would seem that the popular understanding of international differs from the understanding in employment regulations. For each specific scheme the level of awareness was substantially lower, and actual employment was lower again still. This section summary will firstly look at the schemes open to students before they graduate, then move to schemes open to new graduates, then discuss the findings related to the more specialist schemes.

Recalling the QAA framework for higher education qualifications and the importance of the employability skills it describes, the opportunity to get experience by part-time and vacation work, and even more so by the structured linking of theory to practice offered by work placements, could provide students with an 'entry' to the UK economy. These opportunities would allow students to become aware of employment practices (such as recruitment processes, employment contracts, induction, and training), and could also give them topics and sites for researching their dissertations. Therefore the low awareness of the three schemes available to students before they graduate – Part-time work, Vacation work, and Work Placements – constitutes a stumbling block. The confusion concerning obtaining National Insurance numbers reported in the UKCOSA survey confounds this lack of awareness: in short NI offices prefer students to find employment before issuing them with a NI number, whilst potential employers may see the lack of a NI number as indicating that this student is not eligible to work.

However a more positive interpretation of the results concerning the three schemes available to students before they graduate is that the obstacles are more due to a lack of awareness of the schemes rather than to any resistance to them. Over 50% of the employers surveyed had little or no awareness of the schemes whilst over 60% answered that either they would, or did not know whether they would, employ students under these schemes in the future. The positive qualitative additional comments of those employers who have employed these students suggest that activities which increase understanding of these schemes could result in increased uptake. One

employer commented in an interview: *'I love having international students. They learn differently, they bring lots of different input... a good opportunity for me and my business'*.

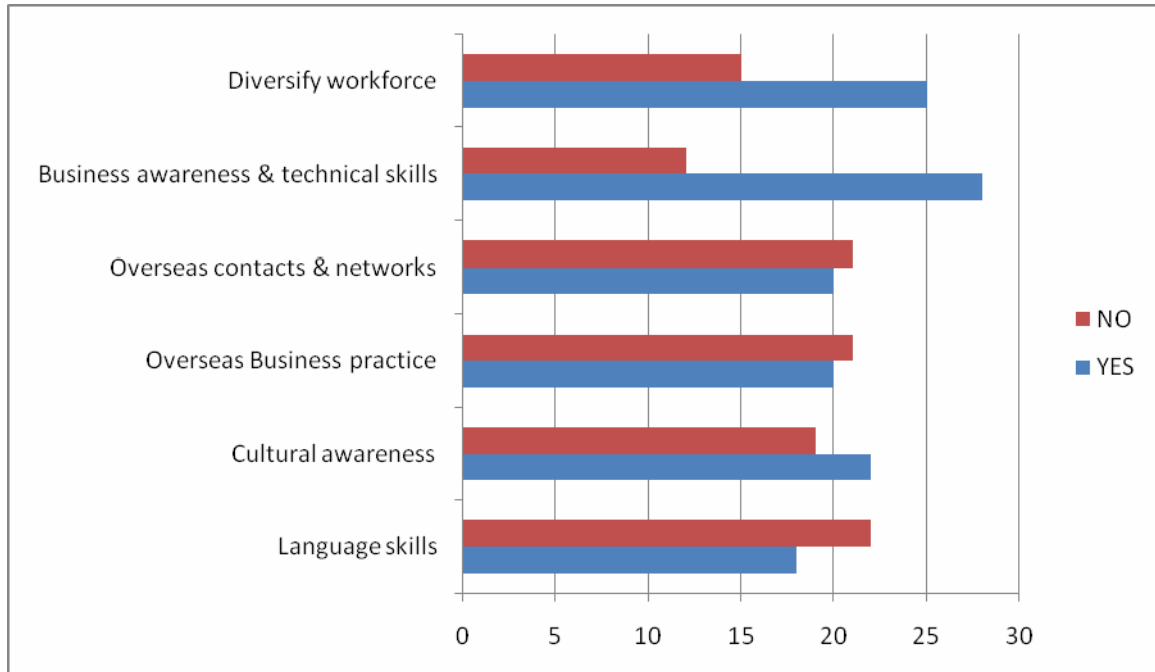
Turning to schemes open to new graduates, this is the area where there have been most changes, and hence where uncertainty was likely to be highest. The Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme (SEGS) was restricted to graduates of certain specialities, and the Master's Graduates scheme was restricted to Masters students who started their courses after May 2006, but as of May 2007 the International Graduate Scheme (IGS) allows all international graduates (undergraduates as well as Masters, in any subject area) to work for one year. One engineering employer said in an interview: *'There are millions of schemes, too many acronyms'*. Well over 60% of the employers had little or no awareness of any of these schemes, and unsurprisingly 78% knew little or nothing of the new International Graduate Scheme. Again, however, there seems to be little resistance to the possibility to employing international graduates, as 62% indicated that either they would, or did not know whether they would, employ graduates under the IGS scheme in the future.

Turning to the more specialist schemes, the highest reported awareness of all the schemes researched was the Non Shortage (Commercial & Business Work permits) Scheme with only 42% declaring little or no understanding, whereas 73% knew little or nothing of the Training and Work Experience Scheme. Most noticeably, the qualitative additional responses concerning these schemes were amongst the most passionate. In a follow-up interview one of these employers reported: *'it was a very distressing time'*. Two of the write-in comments to the survey recreate critical incidents related to these schemes; however it is unclear if either of these refers to recruitment processes which would have involved university careers services. The complexity of the two incidents might serve to delimit the areas of responsibility of university careers services, and they will need to consider whether they would have the desire or the resources to become involved with such specific cases.

### 5.3. Section C: Benefits and Skills

#### Q 47 – 52

Suggested benefits of employing international students or graduates (n = 42).



#### Q53: Additional benefits

- *Have never found it necessary to employ anyone to provide the above skills. There is always another way ... (Administration)*
- *All of the above are of use although not necessarily part of the day to day benefits. We are looking for a particular skill set and recently we have found students with the geological skills we require difficult to find from the UK universities. (Geological Consultancy)*
- *Using business skills and practices from abroad which can benefit UK companies to make us more competitive. (Manufacturing and Processing)*

#### 5.3.1. Summary of Section C

It would seem from the survey findings that the suggested benefits which are most highly prized relate to what might be thought of as 'over here' attributes, such as making up for domestic skills shortages. The highest ranked benefit is 'business awareness and technical skills' and the second highest relates to diversifying the workforce. In contrast, what could be



thought of as *'over there'* attributes (knowledge of overseas practices, contacts and languages) are rated less highly. Although one of the qualitative comments does clearly invoke *'over there'* knowledge, it still implies that this is beneficial for activities carried out in the UK. This would seem to fall short of the goals for the internationalisation of UK education and the development of a strong globalised economy described in the international strategy paper of the Department for Education and Skills, which includes the priority *'to develop our capacity to engage strategically with a wide range of partners across the world'*, these responses seem to imply an *inward* rather than an *outward* involvement in globalisation. One of the employers interviewed, however, (manufacturing and processing) did describe clear outward benefits:

*'When you're doing trade outside Europe they do things differently, so it's more important to employ someone who knows that country intimately'... 'Translation skills are very important'... 'It's also about having someone who understands cultural things better'... 'we've also been able to develop a more European Management style now'... 'Experience has proved to be a great success'... 'Highly recommend it'... 'It makes you consider and develop how your business is run'.*

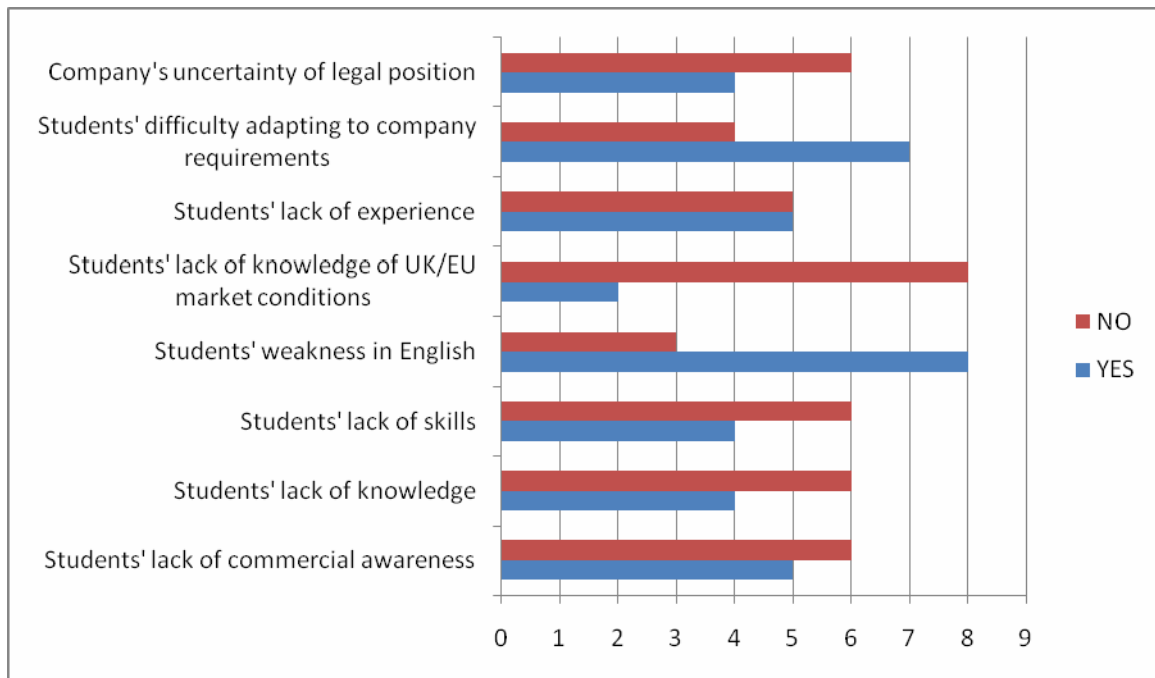
Two other employers in interviews mentioned language skills, and one specifically identified the ability to speak Mandarin as a benefit. Another employer in manufacturing and processing reported:

*Language skills are really useful and their ability to know about the products (graduates/students). They can do the job, but also help when it comes to translation of technical materials, i.e. sales literature (which is technical). It also helps when dealing with other countries as they can speak the language and the people they are speaking with can understand them.*

#### **5.4. Section D: Barriers and Difficulties**

##### **Q54 – 61**

Actual difficulties found when employing international students and graduates. Employers who have employed students under any of the schemes above (n=11).



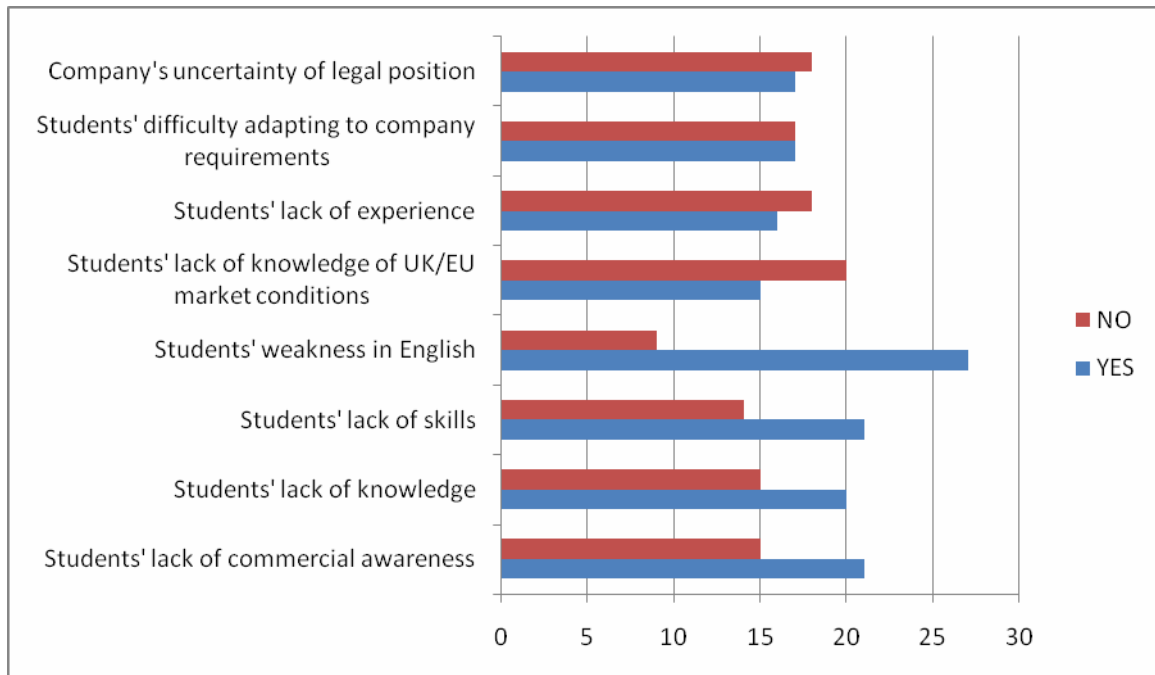
#### Q62: Additional actual difficulties

- *Not enough commercial experience to be any use to our business. (Training)*
- *Since many of these placements are initiated and administrated by a particular organisation (such as EMDA for example) I think it would be beneficial for all parties concerned to collate a guide on how to make a placement as fulfilling as possible for both student and company. I'd expect both students and companies who have undertaken placements with the benefit of hindsight have much to say about how they might approach the same placement if it was undertaken again ... what would they do differently, etc? That would be helpful for future placements. (Auctions)*
- *Whilst a student does have a 12 month (or so) period to be employed following their studies, this can prove problematic if you are unable/unwilling to sponsor another visa. (Utilities)*
- *Not really, all students we have employed have generally been excellent – sometimes there may have been a language barrier which was soon overcome. (Chamber of Commerce)*

#### Q63 - 70

Perceived difficulties: potential barriers to employing International students.  
Employers who have not employed students under the schemes above (n=

35). [Note: some responses included both actual difficulties and perceived difficulties].



#### Q71: Additional perceived difficulties

- *We need experienced staff with a vast knowledge that can be shared during lecturing. Young people would not have enough on the job experience to answer all delegates' questions. It is the mixture of qualifications plus a wide range of industrial experience that anyone under 45 years would not have. (Training)*
- *Company's uncertainty of legal position of employing them – this is down to a perception of lack of awareness perhaps; or better communication that I am able to employ easily. (Administration)*
- *Many of the above barriers would also be relevant for UK students & so are not specific to international students. None of these are insurmountable & we do carry out student placement roles within our business. (Waste management & recycling)*
- *Most positions are telesales. The vast majority are non-graduate staff and likely to remain so as graduates would not find sufficient intellectual challenge in the role. (Service sector)*
- *Students not being available in our area – rural Lincolnshire. (Education)*

#### 5.4.1. Summary of Section D

There were two areas where, amongst those that had already employed international students, those reporting difficulties outnumbered those who did not find difficulties. These were firstly students' *'weakness in English'*, followed by students' *'difficulty in adapting to the company requirements'*. These two points provide an agenda for activities within the universities to better prepare students for employment, which will be discussed below.

Amongst those who had not already employed international students the biggest perceived obstacle was again the students' weakness in English, but there were several additional areas where those who anticipated difficulties outnumbered those who did not anticipate difficulties, these areas were: students' *'lack of commercial awareness'*; *'lack of knowledge'*; and *'lack of skills'*. Care should be taken not to draw too firm conclusions from what was not a probability sample, but these findings suggest that the overall perceived anxiety amongst those who have not employed these students might be greater than the actual difficulties found amongst those employers who had employed them. This provides an agenda for activities to be undertaken by universities with employers to close this perception gap.

For activities aimed at employers, some of the perceived difficulties seem to draw on assumptions (concerning age, experience, job expectations, and willingness to relocate) which may not hold true. One of the qualitative additional comments specifically requests the production of a guide based on experiences on how to make placements satisfactory for both students and employers, so it is quite possible, therefore, that awareness-raising activities such as this, in particular drawing on successful examples and case studies, might reduce these perceived difficulties. Another necessary component of any guide would be clarification of the legal position of such employment. One employer expressed this need for clarification clearly in a follow-up interview:

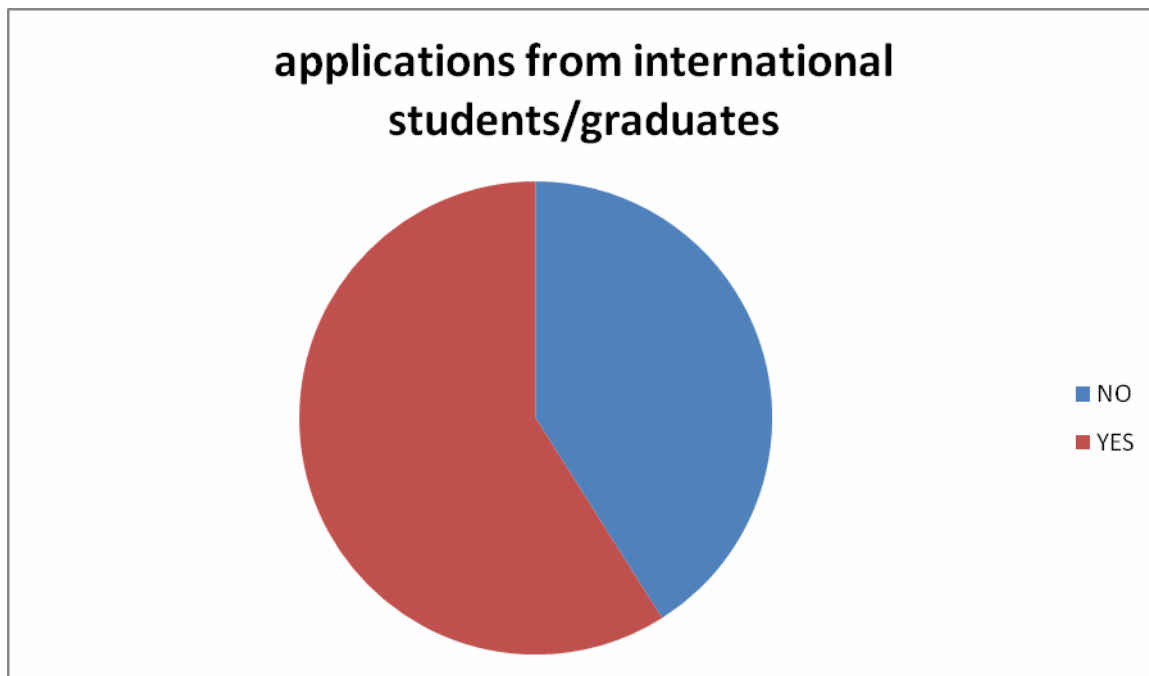
*'The system is very complicated'... 'People are under so much pressure about who can and can't work in this country that they don't want to make mistakes, so it takes longer'.*

From the telephone interviews it seems that barriers were fewer amongst large employers who can have specialist departments, for example one large international company employs a mixture of placement and graduate students and employs 30,000 people globally. They have a central office which looks after international employees, arranges visas and green cards etc., and the employees move around from one country to another. A much smaller employer, however, also had a successful experience of employing a Chinese graduate under a scheme promoted by one of the participating universities, hence although a small company felt *'one part of a fairly big jigsaw'*. It would seem that careers services' activities aimed at employers might be particularly needed by such smaller employers who do not have their own dedicated resources.

Turning to the activities aimed at students, the findings here concerning weakness in English are similar to those reported in the UKCOSA survey mentioned in the introduction of this report. It would seem that the English language requirements for successful work placement are higher than, or different from, the language requirements for successful study. Further research is needed to unveil the specific nature of such linguistic deficits, but they may well include interpersonal communications within an organisation, as well as representational skills with customers or suppliers. Recalling the employability criteria in the QAA framework for higher education qualifications, and recalling also the large and growing number of international students within UK universities, it is possible to link this language deficit to the second obstacle reported by employers (the students' *'difficulty in adapting to the company requirements'*). It would seem that universities need to take longitudinal activities with international students, beginning at their induction to their university courses and continuing throughout their studies, which should aim to enhance their cross-cultural employment skills, both linguistically and related to the culture of work. For this to be effective the careers services would need to work closely with other parts of their institutions.

## 5.5. Section E: Take-up and roles

**Q72: received applications from international students/graduates?**



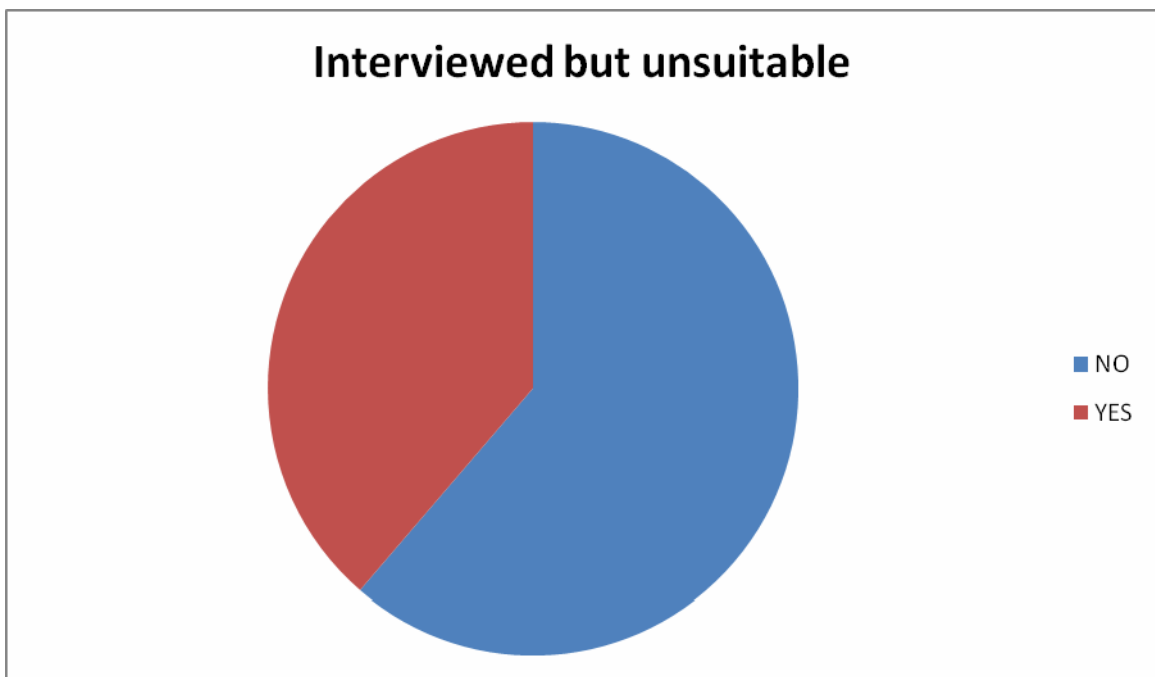
[Q 73 – 78 only for those who replied 'yes'.]

### **Q73: Comments on the quality of the applications**

- *Some good quality applicants, mainly Indian IT post graduate students, however I think it would take longer to explain what needs to be done than to do it myself. (Administration)*
- *Generally good, English sometimes poor – although I've always questioned the legality of employment. (Administration)*
- *The majority of applications we receive are international and they vary enormously in quality. Some are very poor, some are excellent. It is difficult to generalise. We review all applicants and interview those with the skills we require. (Geological consultancy)*
- *The applicant was fine and we employed them. (Administration)*
- *Some have been excellent, but others have been poorly written or very generic. This is however, not exceptional for applications generally. (Utilities)*
- *Usually far too technical and not enough understanding of what they are applying for. (Administration)*

- *As with applications from all other areas, some are very good others are not. (Engineering)*
- *This particular international graduate was interviewed along with other graduates (resident and international) and was the best person for the job. We were not allowed to employ her by the home office because they did not think the salary was appropriate (which it was) and they think we should have advertised nationally which was not at all practical for our company. (Administration)*
- *Very good on paper. (Architectural services)*
- *This was for an IT systems development role. The one applicant interviewed had both inadequate English and insufficient experience. (Service sector)*
- *Some good some poor. (Manufacturing & processing)*
- *Good quality, have even asked a few to come back in the future. (Chamber of Commerce)*
- *Exceptionally good, skilled and motivated. (Manufacturing & processing)*
- *Tended to be reasonably good. (Engineering)*

**Q74: short listed/interviewed, but found unsuitable (n=42)**



**Q75: Reasons for unsuitability**

- *Usually lack of English suitable for our industry or lack of knowledge of UK construction regulations. (Architecture)*
- *We test their skills, as well as interviewing them. We employ only those who best suit our needs. (Geological consultancy)*
- *Comprehension in English. (Utilities)*
- *Better candidates. (Administration)*
- *Lack of interpersonal skills / poor motivation / poor communication skills / lack of commercial understanding - please note these are also reasons we have rejected some resident graduates also. (Administration)*
- *Poor grasp of electronics or telecommunications. (Manufacturing & Processing)*
- *Lack of knowledge. (Engineering)*

**Q76: Employed in which capacity**

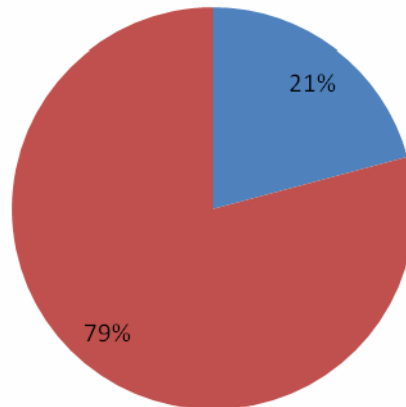
- *Part-time architectural students. (Architecture)*
- *We employ them full time but initially on a 1 year contract only. (Geological consultancy)*
- *Full time. Computer Software Programmer. (Administration)*
- *We have employed international student in a range of areas both in 12 month placement roles and two year graduate schemes. (Engineering)*
- *Full time job on a graduate training scheme. (Engineering)*
- *Full time job. Electronic design engineer. (Manufacturing & Processing)*
- *Full time for mainly six months. (Chamber of commerce)*
- *Full time engineer. (Manufacturing & Processing)*
- *Full time and part time, have been employed as engineers. (Engineering)*

**Q77: Consider employing in similar capacity in future (n=24)**



## employing in similar capacity in future

■ NO ■ YES



### Q78: Additional comments

- *Terrible experience. We did everything correctly and paid for the work permit application. Applications were rejected for ridiculous reasons by the home office. This does not help employers like ourselves to employ international graduates at all. (Administration)*
- *Would only consider employing international students/graduates as long as the proper support and backup was in place and the student/graduate could satisfy all of the 'perceived difficulties' identified above. (Architectural Services)*
- *It works for us. (Chamber of commerce)*
- *The process is just hard work – and work permits said we could not employ them over 3 years and would have to seek European replacements when the permit ran out. Not exactly motivating for the student. And I wanted them to take a business studies course but the local college would not take them because of their English – so we had to travel further for a degree course – the graduate is getting exceptional results and their English is perfectly good enough for the university. It is quite a struggle. (Manufacturing & Processing)*
- *Our office is based near a university which is a great source of international students. It would be good to have better access to them. We were also not aware of these work schemes ... could perhaps publicise them more. (Administration)*

#### 5.5.1. Summary of Section E

Concerning the quality of applications received, the comments here stress how these share common attributes with all applications in general: a wide range in quality, some poor, some reasonably good, some good, some excellent, some '*exceptionally good, skilled and motivated*'. This again seems to indicate that employers are open to engaging these students/graduates, that they are seen as comparable with other applicants. Certain themes already mentioned are repeated here: candidates' weak English, their not knowing what is appropriate behaviour (in this case what to include in an application), and companies' uncertainty about the legality of this employment.

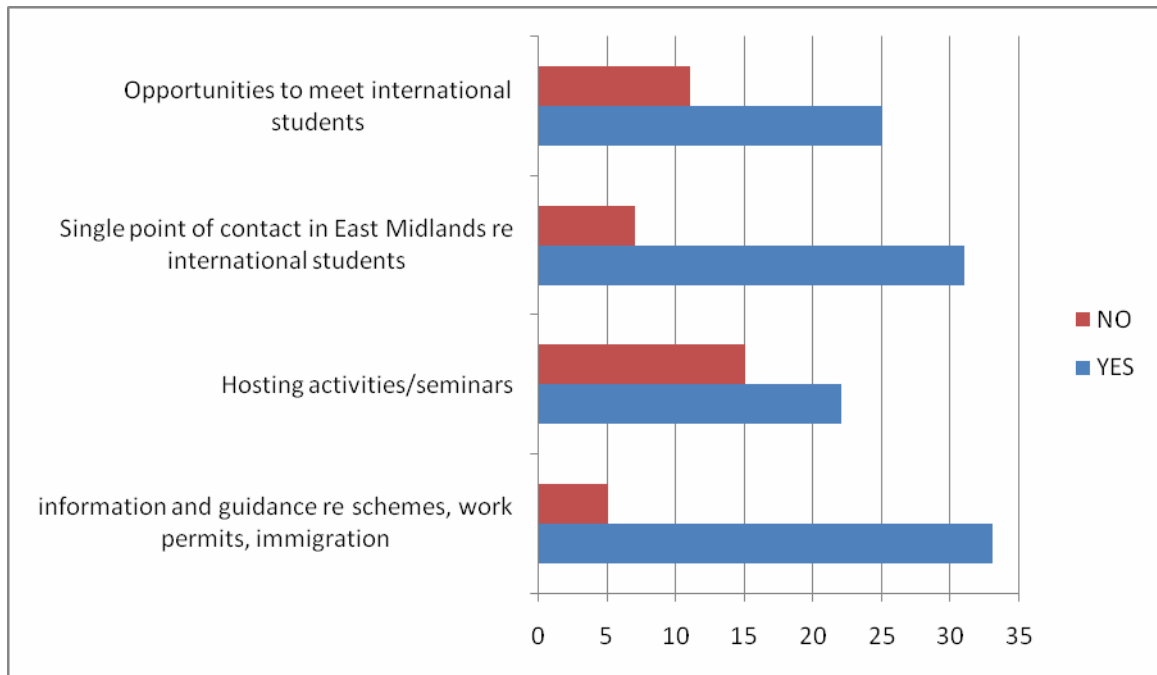
Concerning reasons for unsuitability discovered during the recruitment process, the comment from the Architecture company, which links *English 'suitable for our industry'* to the specific UK construction regulations is particularly interesting as it goes beyond what is commonly seen as a general language weakness to recognising that students' skills and knowledge must be appropriate to subject/sector specific needs. Similarly the deficits given by the administration company (although stressing that other graduates share the same weaknesses) do add to the agenda of activities that careers services can possibly undertake with international students: including interpersonal and communication skills linked to UK ways of doing business. Two of these comments also refer to knowledge gaps.

The students had been employed in a range of types of employment, full time and part time, work placements, 12 month and two year contracts, and - implicitly but not clearly stated - in permanent posts. Most companies would be happy to employ such students and graduates again in the future. The additional comments in some cases specifically request the following: information from universities concerning these schemes; support/backup during placements; action to address the perceived student difficulties identified earlier. As mentioned in the summary to section B, however, the repeated reference to certain critical incidents should be seen as cautionary,

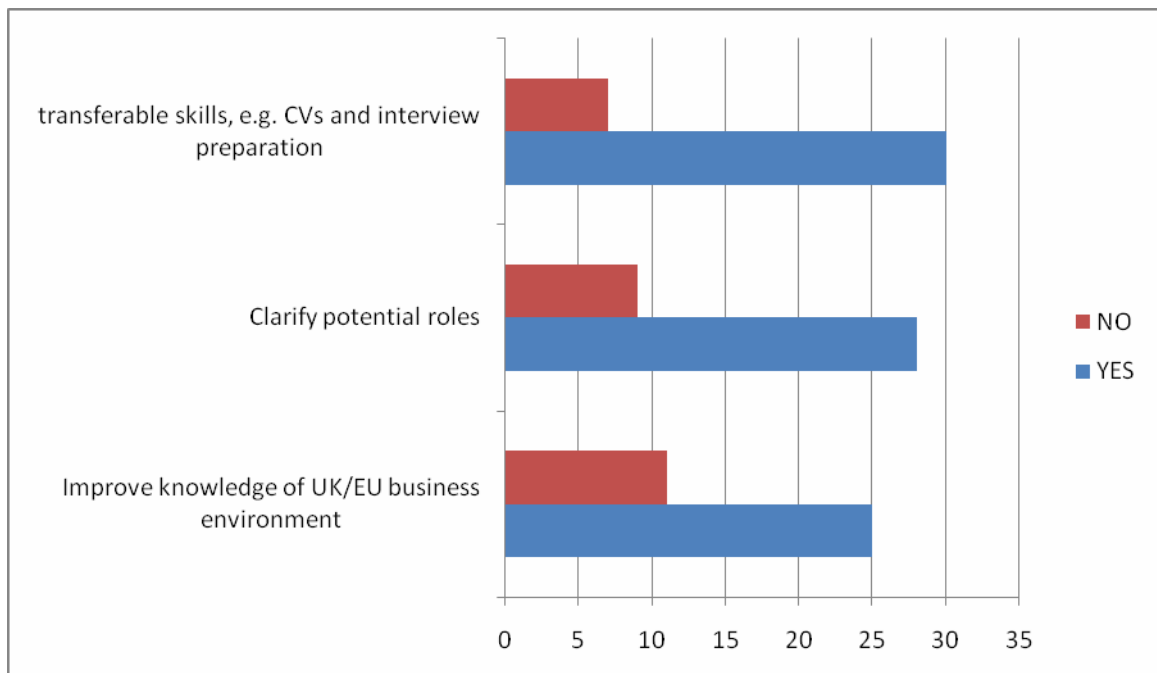
and the university careers services need to clarify exactly where the limits of their involvement would be in such cases.

## 5.6. Section F: Role of and assistance from university careers services.

### Q79- 82: Services to employers



### Q83 – 86: Preparation of International students



### Q86: Suggestions concerning University Careers Services help.

- *To us, one of the main problems is the lack of particular geological skills of students currently graduating from UK universities. (Geological consultancy)*
- *Ensure that employers' expectations are managed so that they understand that the Home Office can reject applications for seeming stupid reasons and therefore not to assume that a work permit application will be successful – this would be particularly useful for smaller companies. (Administration)*
- *Ensuring the standard of English, (spoken and written), was of a high enough standard. (Architectural services)*

#### 5.6.1. Summary of Section F

There is a clear demand for support for employers from the University Careers Guidance services for (in order of preference): information and guidance concerning these schemes; a single point of contact in the region concerning the employment of international students/graduates; opportunities to meet international students; and organising seminars.

In follow-up interviews one employer suggested that it would be useful to have an 'advisory post', who they can get in touch with when they have any questions, or need clarification on employing International students. Also several employers in interviews suggested that this guidance could be in the form of either a dedicated web-site or emailed newsletters, covering issues such as: what the laws and regulations are; understanding the benefits of skills from other countries; examples of best practices; important information such as changes in the legislation.

Concerning preparation of students again there is a clear demand for action: improving transferable skills (CVs and interview preparation); clarifying potential roles; and improving the students' knowledge of UK/EU business environment. The write-in comments again stress the importance of information and the need for English skills to be appropriate.

## 6 Recommendations

These recommendations will be divided into three sections: those concerning further research; those concerning careers services activities directed at students; and those concerning careers services activities directed at employers.

### *Recommendations concerning further research.*

Two further research projects are prompted by the findings of this report and which will enable the activities recommended below:

- Further research should be undertaken to gather students' perspectives of their experiences on the various schemes; this would enable the preparation of case studies to form part of further awareness-raising activities.
- Further research should be undertaken to explore more deeply the types of language weakness that is reported to be the major deterrent to employment of international students and graduates; this would enable better preparation of international students and graduates for such employment.

### *Recommendations concerning careers services activities directed at students*

The difficulties reported could be described as resulting from cultural difference as much as knowledge/skills gaps, and go beyond the needs for training on CV writing and interview skills . Hence:

- Activities with students should be longitudinal, beginning at their induction to their university courses and continuing throughout their studies.
- Training should be targeted to enhance students' cross-cultural employment skills, both linguistically and related to the culture of work.
- Careers services need to prepare international students for the diversity of information channels used in recruitment, the corresponding language demands associated with them, and also the underlying HR practices which justify them.

- The careers services would need to work closely with other parts of their institutions.

*Recommendations concerning careers services activities directed at employers*

There is a need for awareness-raising activities in general, as obstacles are more due to a lack of awareness of the schemes rather than to any resistance to them.

- The careers services need to define the amount, and the limits, of support that they will be able to offer to employers.
- The careers services should explore the possibility of a single, regional point of contact, to be a source of dissemination of information, provision of seminars and workshops, and organising events where employers can meet students.
- The careers services should explore the possibility of using web-based information channels.
- The particular needs of small and medium size enterprises are likely to be the main focus of these dissemination activities, as such SMEs are unlikely to have in-house expertise.
- The careers services should negotiate with NI offices to find a solution to the vicious circle related to issuing NI numbers, and hence clarify the work entitlement status of students.
- The IGS scheme, (which is open generally for all students regardless of level and subject speciality and which replaces two more complex schemes) should be publicised to clarify the work entitlement status of graduates.
- The careers services should prepare case studies based on the experiences and lessons learnt from previous such employment in order to close the gap between perceived difficulties and reported benefits.
- These case studies should identify the possible benefits of these schemes for *outward* involvement in globalisation as well as domestic benefits.

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## Appendix A

### Survey of East Midlands Employers concerning recruitment of international students or graduates.

We would be grateful if you could complete and submit the following questionnaire, it will only take a few minutes.

#### Section A: Company Information

1. Company Name: (write in)
2. Contact name: (write in)
3. Position: (write in)
4. Contact telephone: (write in)
5. Contact email: (write in)
6. Website (write in)
7. Number of employees in your location:
  - 11-49: (value = 1)
  - 50-100: (value = 2)
  - 101-250 (value = 3)
  - More than 250 (value = 4)
8. Does your company/organisation recruit staff directly in your location in the East Midlands? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
9. Does your company/organisation recruit nationally/centrally? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
10. If necessary, please clarify the recruitment process you use, for example do you use a pre-screening agency as part of your recruitment process (write in box)

#### Main area of activity:

11. Please identify the main area of activity of your company or organisation (tick one box)
  - Creative Industries (value = 1)
  - Finance and management consultancy (value = 2)
  - Research (commercial) (value = 3)
  - Healthcare, medical and social services (value = 4)



Education (value = 5)  
 Service sector (value = 6)  
 Engineering (value = 7)  
 Property & construction (value = 8)  
 Legal services (value = 9)  
 Manufacturing and processing (value = 10)  
 IT, economics, statistics and management services (value = 11)  
 Administration (value = 12)  
 Publishing and media (value = 13)  
 Marketing and PR (value = 14)  
 Other (write in box)

## Section B: Awareness and take-up of schemes

One aim of the current government international strategy concerning education and skills is to 'equip employers and employees with the skills needed for a global economy'. For the following schemes please indicate if you understand them in detail; or if you have a general understanding of them; or if you have little or no understanding of them. Also indicate if you have employed, or envisage employing, people under these schemes.

[If you are unaware of any UK government schemes in respect to the employment of international students please go straight to section C.]

### Part-time work:

12. International students with a valid student visa are usually entitled to work part-time (for 20 hours per week) during their studies. (tick one box)
  - understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)
  - a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)
  - little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
13. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
14. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?

15. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Vacation work:**

16. International students with a valid student visa are usually entitled to work full time during their vacations (tick one box)  
understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)  
a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)  
little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
17. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
18. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?
19. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Work placements:**

20. International students may undertake a structured period of work experience integral to their course for up to 12 months. (tick one box)  
understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)  
a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)  
little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
21. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
22. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?
23. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme (SEGS):**

24. Graduates of science, mathematics and technology are usually able to work for one year in the UK after they graduate (tick one box)  
understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)  
a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)  
little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)

25. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
26. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?
27. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

#### **International Graduate Scheme (IGS):**

28. As of May 2007 SEGS will be replaced with a new International Graduates Scheme (IGS) which will allow international graduates in any subject to work for one year (tick one box)
- understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)
  - a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)
  - little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
29. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)

#### **Master's Graduates:**

30. Graduates of Master's programmes in any subject, and who started their course after 1 May 2006, are usually able to work for one year in the UK after they graduate (tick one box)
- understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)
  - a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)
  - little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
31. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
32. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?
33. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

#### **Shortage Occupation List scheme:**

34. Employers can recruit people who possess skills which are on the Work Permits (UK) Shortage Occupation List (tick one box)
- understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)
  - a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)
  - little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)
35. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
36. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?

37. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Non Shortage Occupations (Commercial & Business Work permits):**

38. In some circumstances employers can recruit from outside the EEA for vacancies not on the Shortage Occupation List but for which they have been unable to find suitable candidates after advertising the post (tick one box)

understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)

a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)

little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)

39. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)

40. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?

41. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Training and Work Experience Scheme:**

42. Employers can apply for a TWES permit so they can give training or work experience to someone who would not otherwise be allowed to work in the UK (usually 12 months) (tick one box)

understanding of scheme in detail (value = 1)

a general understanding of the scheme (value = 2)

little or no understanding of the scheme (value = 3)

43. Have you ever employed anyone under this scheme? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)

44. If yes, what were your thoughts on this scheme?

45. Do you envisage employing people under this scheme in the next three years? (yes/No/ don't know)

**Finally, in this section**

46. Would you be willing to apply for work permits if required? (yes/no)

**Section C: Benefits and Skills**

Skills often identified as being essential for global organisations include being able to work comfortably in multinational teams, and knowing about different business methods, legislation and ways of working. Employing international students and graduates has been suggested as one way for organisations to gain

knowledge of target areas; meaning places where any aspect of a company's activity is currently underway or being considered, including markets, offshore suppliers, offshore outsourcing, joint venture activities, and creation of subsidiaries or branches.

Select any of the following suggested benefits of employing international students or graduates which are relevant to your company: (tick as many boxes as applicable)

- 47. Language skills other than English – helping you communicate with your overseas markets or suppliers (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 48. Cultural awareness – providing advice and information to ensure you make the right impact on your international customers and clients. (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 49. Knowledge of overseas business practice – many international students have worked in their own countries and regions, often in professional and management positions. (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 50. Overseas contacts and networks – making sure you reach the right people and organisations to maximise your export potential. (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 51. Business awareness and technical skills – international students often follow highly vocational courses allowing them to make an immediate impact at work. (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 52. Creating a diverse workforce – enabling your organisation to reflect the changing pattern of the UK working population. (tick value = 1: no tick = 0)
- 53. Are there any additional benefits you would like to add. (write in)

#### **Section D: Barriers and Difficulties**

If you have employed international students in any of the schemes listed in section B above answer questions 46 – 54.

If you have not employed international students in any of the schemes listed in section B above answer questions 55 – 63.

#### **Actual difficulties**

What were the barriers you found to employing international students or graduates: (tick as many boxes as applicable)

54. Students' lack of commercial awareness (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
55. Students' lack of knowledge (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
56. Students' lack of skills (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
57. Students' weakness in English language (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
58. Students' lack of knowledge of UK/EU market conditions (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
59. Students' lack of experience (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
60. Students' difficulty of adapting to company requirements (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
61. Company's uncertainty of legal position of employing them (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
62. Are there any comments about difficulties you would like to add?  
(Write in box)

### **Perceived difficulties**

What are the potential barriers to employing international students or graduates: (tick as many boxes as applicable)

63. Lack of commercial awareness (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
64. Lack of knowledge (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
65. Lack of skills (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
66. Weakness in English language (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
67. Lack of knowledge of UK/EU market conditions (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
68. Lack of experience (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
69. Difficulty of adapting to company requirements (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
70. Company's uncertainty of legal position of employing them (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
71. Are there any comments about difficulties you would like to add?  
(Write in box)

### **Section E: Take-up & Roles**

72. Have you ever received applications from international students/graduates? (yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)

**(If NO go to section F)**

73. If YES would you like to comment on the quality of the application?  
(Write in box)
74. Have you ever interviewed or short listed international students/graduates but then found that they were unsuitable?  
(yes/No) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
75. Please outline the reason for their unsuitability. (Write in box)
76. If you have employed international students/graduates, in what capacity (full time/part time; job outline or title) did you employ these international students/graduates? (Write in box)
77. Would you consider employing international students/graduates in similar capacities in the future? (yes/no) (yes value = 1: no value = 0)
78. Are there any comments about your experiences of employing international students you would like to add? (Write in box)

## **Section F: Role of/Assistance from Careers Services**

Which of the following services would you like university careers services to offer to employers in relation to assisting employment of international students or graduates? (tick as many boxes as applicable)

79. Provide information and guidance to employers related to international student employment schemes, understanding work permits and immigration issues. (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
80. Hosting activities/seminars related to international student employment schemes, understanding work permits and immigration issues. (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
81. Providing a single point of contact for recruitment of international students within the East Midlands universities careers services. (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
82. Opportunities to meet international students to assess their possible contributions to your organisation. (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)

Which of the following activities involving preparation of international students for employment would you like university careers services to offer? (tick as many boxes as applicable)

83. Improving international students' knowledge of UK/EU business environment (yes/no) (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
84. Clarifying the potential roles international students may find in companies (yes/no) (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
85. Improving how international students identify their own skills and translate them into commercially understood skills, e.g. better preparation of CVs, better preparation for interviews or Assessment Centres (yes/no) (tick value = 1: no tick = value 0)
86. Please write in any further suggestions you have concerning how university careers services can help. (Write in box)

**Finally**

87. Would you be willing to discuss matters related to this survey in a short telephone interview? (yes/no)

We would like to thank you very much for taking part in this survey.